21 AMAZING NEW GAMES ■ Max Payne ■ Monkey Island 4 ■ Sigma ■ Commandos 2 AND MORE

PC GAMER

The World's Best-Selling PC Games Magazine

STATE OF THE PC UNION

98 REASONS WHY PC GAMING STILL RULES

WORLD EXCLUSIVE!

DIABLO II

COMPLETE REVIEW AND STRATEGY

Played, beaten, and analyzed — the final word

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VOL. 7 NO. 8 ▪ AUGUST 2000

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Halo

Hot news on the game that everyone's talking about. Plus, a rare designer interview.

15 Reviews

including Daikatana, Motocross Madness 2, and Shogun: Total War

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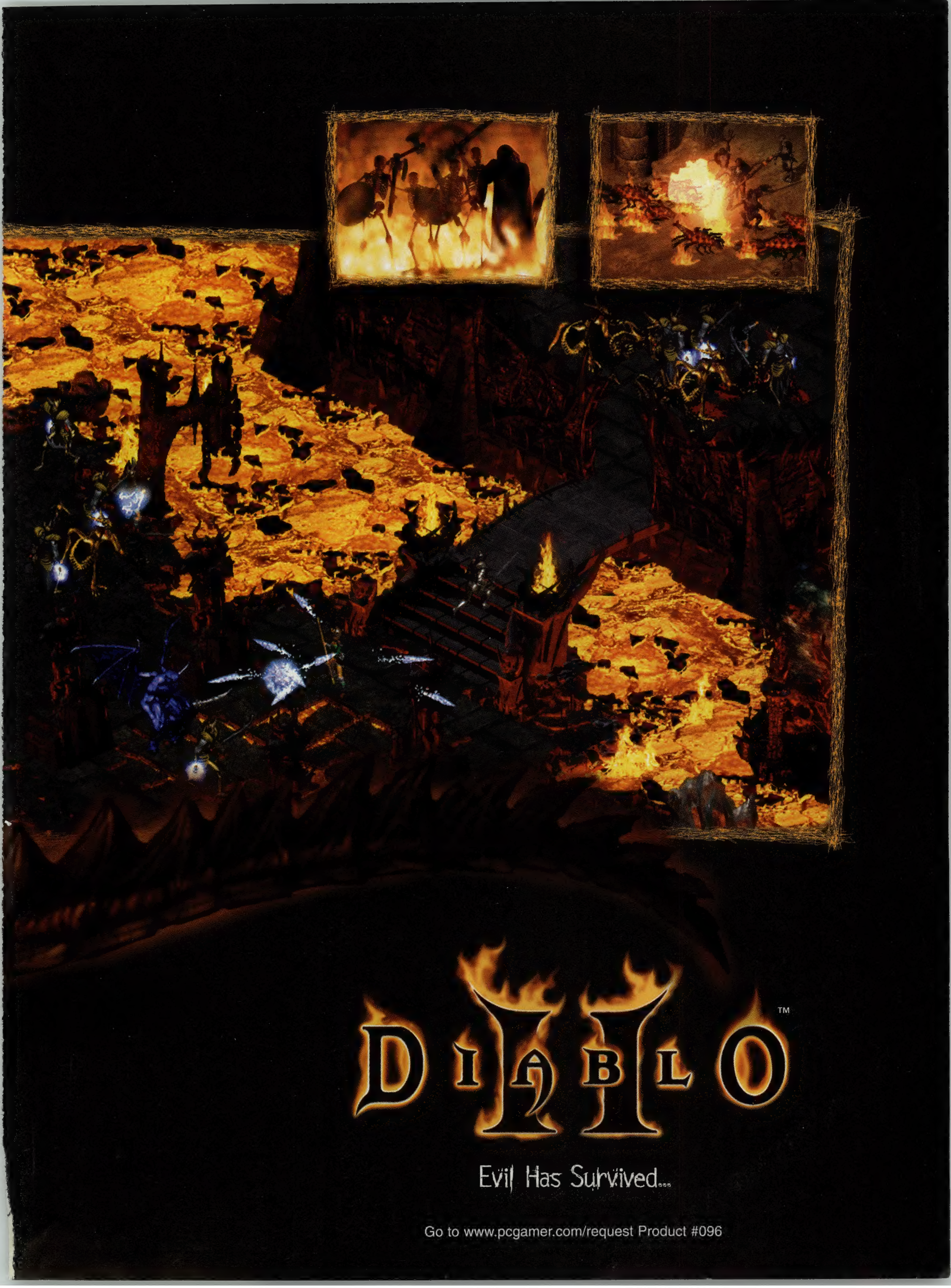
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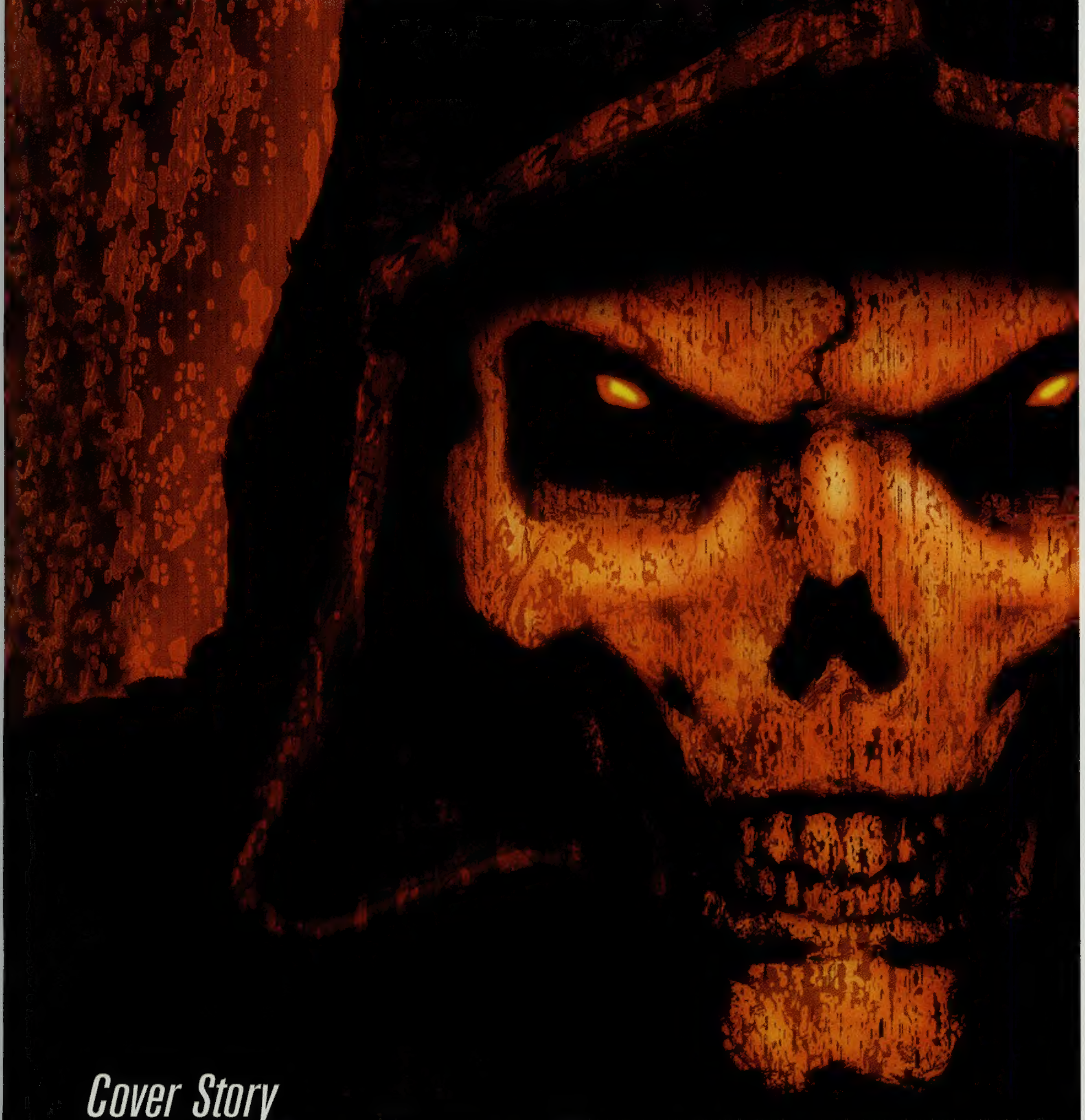

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DIABLO II

Diablo II

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147 We beat the game; find out how with tips from "Mrs. Vederman" and "Ey-eyecee."

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58 State of the PC Union — 98 Reasons Why PC Gaming Still Rules

With the current industry buzz on next-generation consoles and PC development offices going out of business faster than Internet start-ups, it's easy to get a little nervous about the future of PC gaming. Of course, there's nothing to be worried about at all, as evidenced by the 98 reasons why you and your PC are going to continue enjoying the most cutting-edge game experiences for the next several years.

STATE
OF THE
PC UNION

Scoops

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We've returned from the first Electronic Entertainment Expo of the new millennium, and boy have we got the scoop for you! This month's Scoops section is a compilation of all the hottest games that we saw at the show. Get ready to be blown away!

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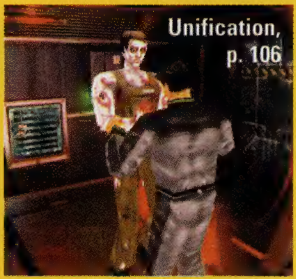

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After hours of dungeon-combing and monster-slaughtering, eating piles of Death by Meat pizza and drinking enough sodas to make thirsty people not very thirsty any more...we collated a fantastic introduction to the classes, skills, foibles, and features of Blizzard's fantastic *Diablo II*.

154 Daikatana
Our reviewer just crawled out from under a rock and discovered that a massive first-person shooter needed solving. This is his report on getting the most from the game's huge arsenal of firepower.

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115 The Vede puts the final versions of the GeForce 2 GTS and the Voodoo5 5500 through the paces. On top of that, he reviews what could possibly be the greatest mouse pad ever made! And of course, what would the Hardware section be without the inimitable (thankfully) Dear Greg?

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GeForce 2 versus Voodoo5...
WE HAVE A WINNER

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Colin's an odd boy. It struck him as intriguing that certain male members of the PC gaming industry may be inclined, and so deserving, to pose for *Playgirl*. So he investigated, and this is his frightening report.

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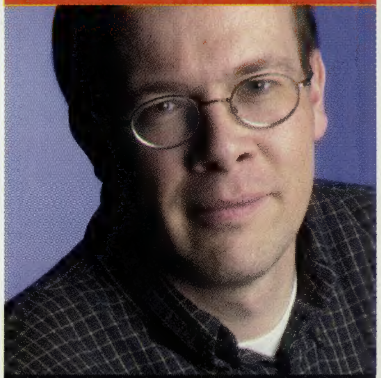
Your letters. This is the bit where you tell us what's on your mind. There are a few of you that we'd rather not uncover what's on your mind, but the rest of you should get scribbling. Or typing. Typing's better. It makes it easier for us to get it in to the magazine. Go on. I dare you.

168 Backspace
Once upon a time there was a guy called John Romero. He was a game designer. Remember that? We asked him some questions, including his favorite game, arrest record, and reaction to people hitting on his girlfriend. Really, we did.

LETTER FROM THE ED.



"Was it over when the Germans bombed Pearl Harbor?"

You'd think that PC gaming was dead if you listened to some of the utter nonsense spewed from industry "luminaries" in recent months. Our assertion that such gossip mongering is patently wrong is much more than blind faith. And we're here to prove it. Aside from 21 of the most intriguing games currently in development, we found 98 reasons why you and your PC are still destined for a long and happy relationship. You can read all about it in the State of the PC Union (page 58).

Of course, the console crowd curiously ignored the fact that several high profile games weren't on display — *Duke Nukem Forever, Team Fortress 2,* and *Unreal 2* are hot properties that didn't throw down with the masses but are sure to be on the wanted list of any serious gamer. The future is rosy. You read it here and that makes it official.

On to the movie quote contest. Seems many of you are fans of *Princess Bride*. Congratulations to all 600 of you who got it right. The one randomly selected winner for this month is Rob Mcintosh of Ripley, NY. Since so many of you are going to get this month's quote correct, you're going to have to go the extra yard to stand out. Make it a joke, an idea, suggestion, critique, or cash (kidding!) to catch my eye and you too could be a lucky winner. The E-mail address is the same — *ednote@pcgamer.com* — use it.

Rob Smith

Rob Smith,
Editor-in-Chief

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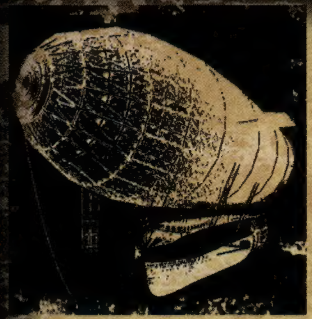

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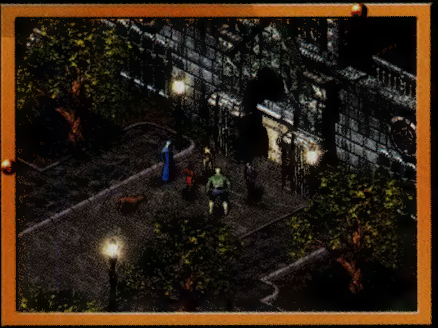

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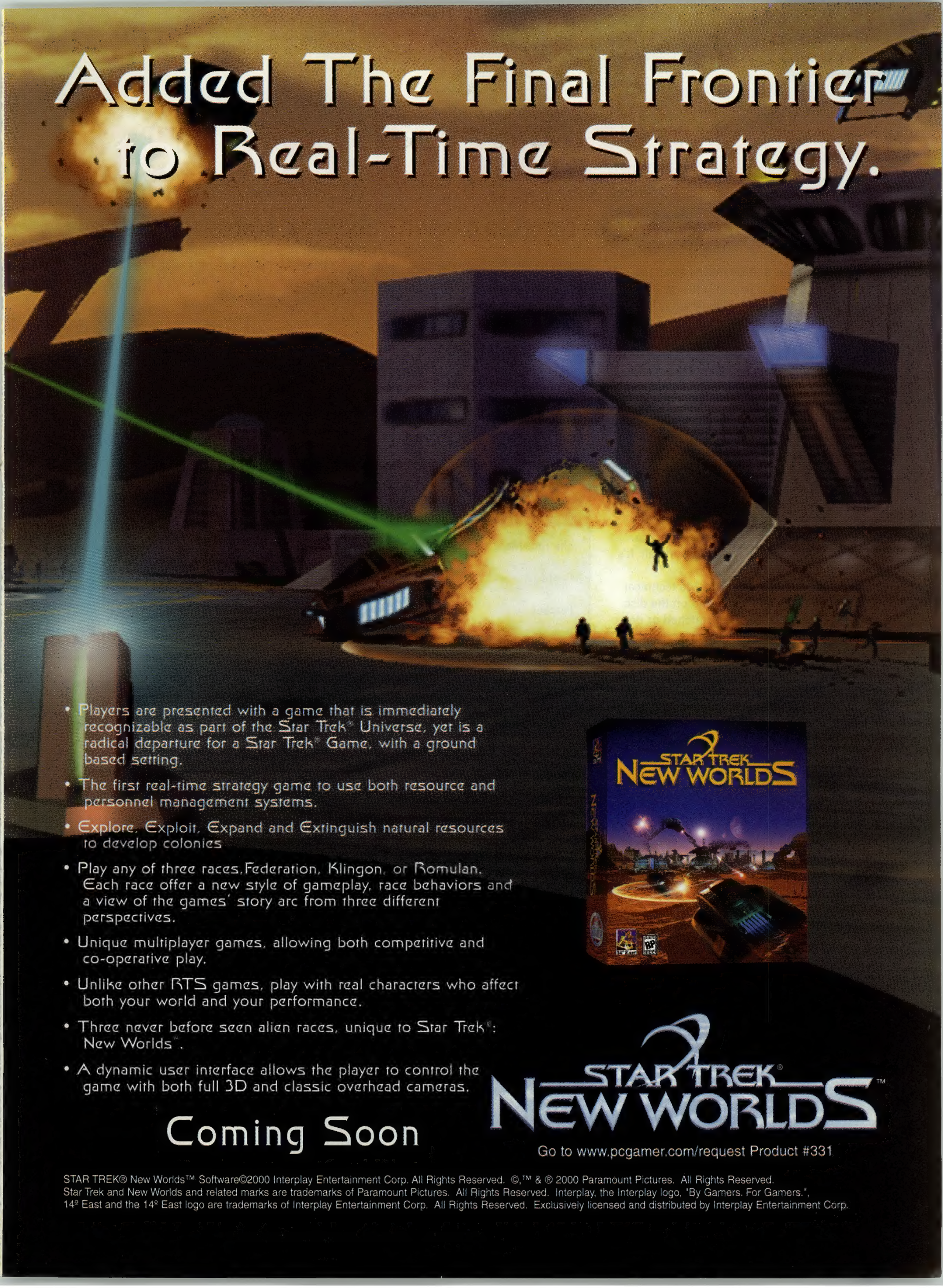
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THE CD IS NOT A COASTER

IT IS A WARM VIRGIN SPRING OF DISTILLED GAMING GOODNESS, SUITED FOR THE GODS

Insert disc, play, and be merry. Reap the bounty of *The CD*. This month, we bring you the sequel to our 1998 Racing Game of the Year, *Motocross Madness 2*, which will inflict several vicarious bruises before you can say "That had to hurt." Also, it's our honor to present the 10-minute E3 *Halo* movie that had us, and everyone else at the show, begging for more. To top it off, we have a new 3D *Lemmings* game that plays a lot like the timeless original, plus a smattering of hot titles that have been soaking up Internet bandwidth as of late. Put *The CD* in your drive, not on your coffee table.

To enjoy the demos, just slide *The CD* into your CD-ROM drive and wait for the handsome interface to appear. Choose a game, read the README, and launch the install. It's that simple.

Unfortunately, we can't provide technical support for the games contained on the disc. However, if the disc itself is scratched or defective, you can order a replacement from *http://support.imaginemedia.com*.

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FINDING YOUR WAY AROUND THE PC GAMER CD

2 ADD-ONS
Try these add-ons for the latest games, including new levels and maps.

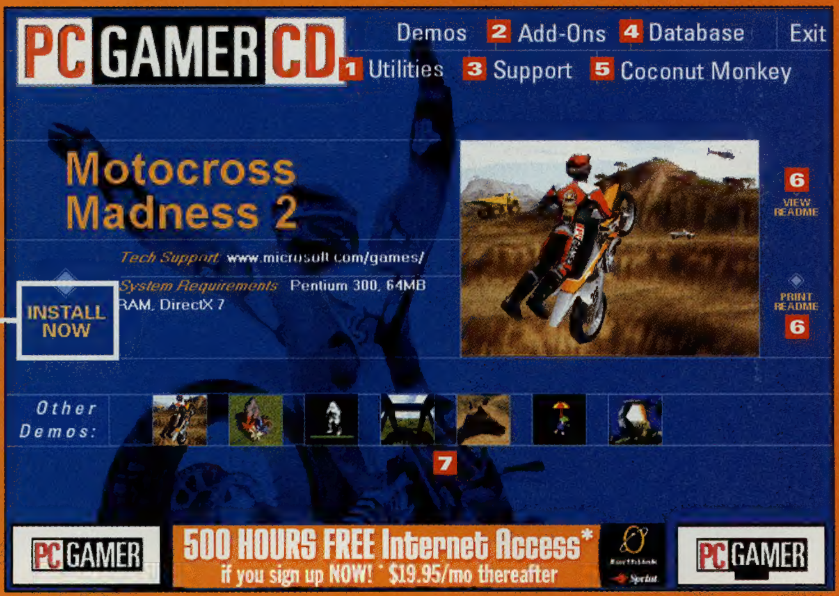
3 SUPPORT
Click here to connect directly to *http://support.imaginemedia.com* for CD support.

4 DATABASE
Curious about past demos or reviews in the mag? Check here.

5 COCONUT MONKEY
What's that crazy Coconut Monkey up to nowadays? Find out by clicking here for fan art, Coconut Monkey's web site, and more!

1 UTILITIES
Click here for a list of the utility programs included on the current CD.

INSTALL
When you're ready to install the displayed demo, click this button to launch the setup program. It might help to close the interface at this time.



PC GAMER CD
Demos
2 Add-Ons
4 Database
Exit
1 Utilities
3 Support
5 Coconut Monkey
Motocross Madness 2
Tech Support
System Requirements Pentium 300, 64MB RAM, DirectX 7
INSTALL NOW
6 VIEW README
PRINT README 6
Other Demos:
7
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if you sign up NOW! * $19.95/mo thereafter
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6 THE README
View and print the readme file for the selected demo. The readme file usually contains technical information, control keys, and more.

7 THE DEMOS
Quickly and easily jump to the demo of your choice. Move the mouse over the picture to see a drop-down description of the demo, and click the picture to go directly there.

MOTOCROSS MADNESS 2

EXCLUSIVE! PCG 2000

- **INSTALL** \Motocross2\MCM2PCG.exe
- **TECH SUPPORT** www.microsoft.com/games
- **CATEGORY** Action
- **COMPANY** Microsoft
- **REQUIRED** Pentium 300, 64MB RAM, DirectX 7

Coconut Monkey pitched his line of fine Motocross garments to manufacturers, but it just didn't fly.

It's back, mates, new and improved. If you're familiar with the original, don't waste your time reading this junk; just jump in the pool. You'll feel right at home.

The original *Motocross Madness* won industry-wide kudos for originality, including our 1998 Racing Game of the Year award. The sequel features all the visceral arcade action of the first, and raises the bar with a few tweaks and a major graphical overhaul.

Once you install the game and select your video card, hop in and head to the options menu. Boost the graphics to suit your system (the game is capable of running at 1600x1200, if you're testing new Intel chips). You can also keep the game from asking you what video card to use each time it's launched by un-checking a box in the advanced options.

Head to single-player. You can get a glimpse of all the tracks, but only two are functional. The first is in the Stunt Race, and the second in Nationals Race. The stunt event is a free-for-all, drive-any-which-way-you-please point competition. Launch off hills and risk your life by contorting your body around your bike. It's that simple. Or try the Nationals race, where you must complete a few laps around a track populated with AI opponents who are all convinced that it's not how you play the game, but whether you win or lose.

Those looking for multiplayer action can connect over an office LAN, via serial cable, or over the Internet through Microsoft's free Gaming Zone. There are players racing at this very moment, looking for another player to balance out their team. Get in there. Just be sure to wear the Coconut Monkey *PC Gamer* jersey to impress those faceless fools.

GUNSHIP

- **INSTALL** \Gunship\GSdemo.exe
- **TECH SUPPORT** www.hasbrointeractive.com
- **CATEGORY** Simulation
- **COMPANY** Hasbro Interactive
- **REQUIRED** Pentium 266, 32MB RAM, DirectX 7

The machine gun will rip right through the protective armor of enemy tanks.

Gunship! has one impressive history. The 1986 original was co-programmed by game god Sid Meier, of *Civilization* fame. *Gunship 2000*, released in 1991, went on to set the standard for helicopter sims for an entire decade.

Welcome to the year 2000, and to *Gunship!*, the most modern and graphically impressive version of the series. Don't even think about playing this game without a joystick. The keyboard controls are complicated enough even while using a trusty Sidewinder, but then simulation fans would expect nothing less.

Unfortunately there is no training mission in the demo. You'll have to jump right into the campaign, single-mission or instant action modes. Basically, all you have to do is follow the Battle Position (BP) waypoint markers and blast anything on the ground that looks remotely threatening. What the hell, shoot it even if it doesn't look all that threatening. Nobody lives in those little houses anyway, except maybe some old cattle rancher who would probably find the gunfire very exciting.

Hold the second button down on the joystick to crane your neck and look out the windows of your helicopter. Use the arrow keys to rotate the chopper, and hit F4 to get a third-person view of the action. Button 3 turns on night vision.

Pop some corn, dim the lights, boost the volume, and enjoy the show.

HALO MOVIE

- **INSTALL** \HaloMovie\halo_e3_2000.mpg
- **TECH SUPPORT** halo.bungie.com
- **CATEGORY** Action
- **COMPANY** Bungie
- **REQUIRED** MPEG video player, such as MS Media Player

Whether you give a rat's buttock about the action genre or not, watch this movie. At E3 1999, *Halo* was shown behind closed doors and everyone who saw it signed a non-disclosure agreement. If they talked, the Men in Black™ would show up a few hours later to haul them away (that's how we lost poor Billy Harms). When the NDA was lifted, the press had a field day, with many claiming it would have been their choice for Game of Show.

At this year's E3, just one month ago, *Halo* was the centerpiece of the Bungie booth. Hordes lined up to watch this movie on the big screen, which used full digital surround sound. At least two fights broke out in line between anxious moviegoers, and an adoring buzz was audible throughout the entire show.

PC Gamer is proud to present this celebrated movie on your very own computer screen. We recommend upgrading to a 35" monitor and a Dolby DTS surround sound system if you can afford it. If not, make do with what you have — dim the lights and boost the volume.

Bungie described how the video was produced before each showing. Basically, they recorded a series of in-game movements, or demos, and scripted them all together. Then they hit play. What you'll see was calculated and displayed entirely in real-time (although the music and sound effects were doctored in post-production).

Halo is easily one of the most anticipated games among us *PC Gamer* editors, right up there with *Team Fortress 2*, *Black & White*, and *Max Payne*. Watch this movie, and you'll see why.

LEMMINGS REVOLUTION

- **INSTALL** \Lemmings\LemDemo.exe
- **TECH SUPPORT** www.talonsoft.com
- **CATEGORY** Puzzle
- **COMPANY** TalonSoft
- **REQUIRED** Pentium 266, 64MB RAM, 3D Accelerator, DirectX 7

If you don't remember *Lemmings*, you probably don't know what DOS stands for. But that's okay — we cater to gamers both young and old (and characters both brawny and minuscule).

Let's see...there was *Lemmings, Oh No! More Lemmings, Lemmings II: The Tribes, 3D Lemmings*, and *Lemmings Paintball*. Some were immediate classics, and some were quite the opposite. Today's incarnation, *Lemmings Revolution*, is arguably the best version we've seen since the old days.

A pack of dirty weasels have captured our obsequious friends and contrived several deadly obstacle courses for you to navigate. These courses surround a cylinder that the player can rotate by holding the right mouse button. You must endow the creatures with skills that will help them escape to their hot air balloon, thus cheating death and annoying the weasels. It's nothing short of a great puzzle game.

The demo includes five maps. If you get frustrated, just hit the Escape key and choose quit. Unlike the full game, you'll be propelled to the next course after a short and persuasive animated commercial.

What cute little Lemmings! On this map, they come from both directions. Hit the spacebar to zoom in for a closer look at the action.

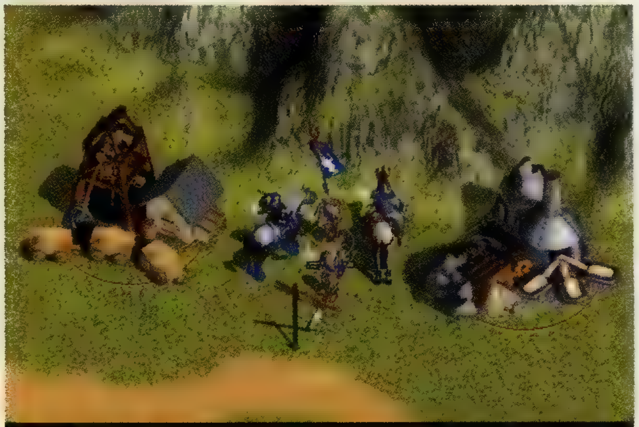
WARLORDS BATTLECRY

- **INSTALL** \Warlords\WarlordsBattlecryDemo.exe
- **TECH SUPPORT** www.warlordsbattlecry.com
- **CATEGORY** Strategy
- **COMPANY** Mattel Interactive
- **REQUIRED** Pentium 200, 64MB RAM, DirectX 7

The Warlords series is familiar to strategy gamers the world over, but perhaps it's a little more foreign to RPG fans. Well, not anymore. The brain surgeons at Mattel Interactive have devised a way to inject an RTS game with the roleplaying aspects you've come to love.

The demo comes with a terrific tutorial that even veteran RTS players should take a look at, especially the last two bits (Resources and Conversion and Building and Production). Once you're ready to skirmish against the AI, head to the main menu and create a Hero. He will evolve over time if you succeed, which impacts future games.

You have the option of turning off the Fog of War detail, so you can see your enemies anywhere on the map, which is recommended for players new to this kind of game. You can also make unvisited areas of the map invisible and turn off Quests. Click the small "Open" graphic to enter your hero and adversaries into the game, and then adjust their statistics. You can play as either Human or Undead.

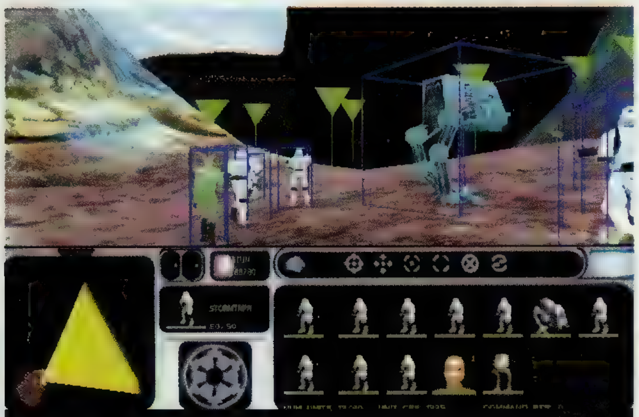


You'll be offered a quest to claim three enemy buildings. Stand between two to convert both at once. Now move on to the next target.

FORCE COMMANDER

- INSTALL \ForceCom\FocomDemo.exe
- TECH SUPPORT www.lucasarts.com
- CATEGORY Strategy
- COMPANY LucasArts
- REQUIRED Pentium 266, 64MB RAM, 3D Accelerator, DirectX 7

If there's one good reason to boot up this demo, it's to hear the techno and hard rock remixes of traditional *Star Wars* symphony tracks. It's like listening to Metallica and dance music phenom Moby take on John Williams. Frightening.



Your leader, pictured on the left in brown clothing, must survive the assault, or else Darth Vader will yell at you.

When the game launches, don't hit any keys if you want to watch the opening movies. There isn't any speech, but you'll get the idea — you're an up and coming Imperial leader, eager to make an impression on the emperor. When you start up the single-player game, you'll enter the briefing room and receive your orders. It's a horrible camera angle; use your Q, W, and E keys to adjust the vantage point and study the map. Listen to the dialogue and see how many *Star Wars* one-liners you can spot. We heard three. Can you beat us?

Once you're comfortable with the mission objectives, hit the ice planet of Hoth and stomp some Rebel scum. The camera controls are a little awkward at first, but you'll get used to it. Basically, just experiment with the block of keys under Q, W, and E. Select your units and right-click to move them and attack. Be sure to keep your leader out of harms way! He's the one with no armor.

THE TIME MACHINE

- INSTALL \TimeMachine\TimeMachineDemo.exe
- TECH SUPPORT www.cryo-interactive.com
- CATEGORY Adventure
- COMPANY Cryo Interactive
- REQUIRED Pentium 233, 32MB RAM, DirectX 7

The Time Machine, inspired by the book of the same name published back in 1895 by author H.G. Wells, projects the player into the year 800,000, where memory of the ancient past is as coveted as water, shelter, and religion.

It looks as if they ride Taun-tauns from *Star Wars* in the year 800,000.

The player steps into the shoes of H.G. Wells himself, who finds the future a desolate desert world ravaged by storms. With his time machine gone, his quest is to restore order to the earth and return home by making contact with a deity known as KHRONOS, The Master of the Hourglass.

Before stepping into the game, go to the options screen and turn on 3D acceleration and boost the resolution. Don't bother changing the key settings unless you're comfortable reading French. Hop into the game and watch the opening cinematic.

Walk your character around with the arrow keys and talk to people using the spacebar. The "Enter" key uses your magic power and "I" opens your inventory. If you hold a weapon, the CTRL key will activate it.

EarthLink

- INSTALL \Elink\Setup.exe
- TECH SUPPORT (800) 395-8410
- CATEGORY Online Service
- COMPANY Earthlink
- REQUIRED 486 or better, 8MB RAM, 14.4Kbps or faster modem

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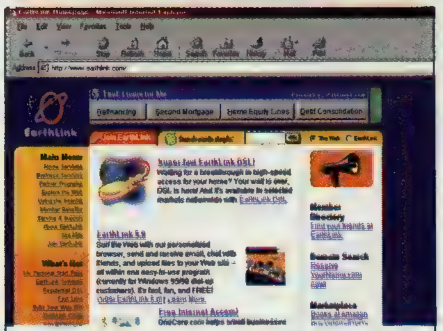

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EXCLUSIVE! BEHIND-THE SCENES OF THE HOTTEST GAMES

Show-Stoppers

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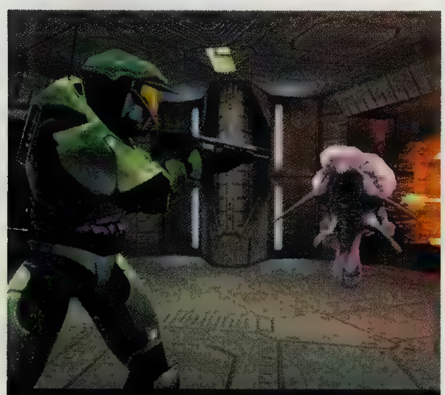
While most of the game may be played from a third-person perspective, sniping will naturally be done from a first-person point of view.

HALO

Reel off a list of the best game designers working at the moment. Go on… (pause for thought). Done? How many of you have Jason Jones on that list? 'Fess up, which one of you said "who"? Would the creator of the classic (albeit Mac) Marathon games, the engineer and designer of *Myth,* and mind behind the stunning *Halo* engine be worthy of a place? Probably, but the publicity shy founder of Bungie has avoided the spotlight of game designer fame. However, with the buzz that's surrounding *Halo*, started at last year's E3, and further enhanced by the demo given at this year's event (and available exclusively on *The PC Gamer CD*), we had to find out what was on the mind of the game's technical engineer and designer.



Your suit of armor is not only valuable protection, but also is home to one of the supporting characters.

"We're all huge sci-fi fans here," says Jones, "and with a few notable exceptions, Hollywood has forgotten how to make a real sci-fi film. So a lot of our inspiration has come from literature."

Unlike cinema, which often blandly duplicates the success of former crowd-pleasers like *Blade Runner*, current sci-fi authors like Neal Stephenson (*Snow Crash*), Iain Banks (*Consider Phlebas*) and Peter Hamilton (*The Neutronium Alchemist*) provide the petrol that fuels the imagination of *Halo*'s team. "In the way that Iain Banks is really hard sci-fi, we're trying to stay very realistic," says Jones. "Everything in the game should be realistic and believable, which is something that Banks does really well."

We've all seen some of the amazing screenshots of *Halo*, but even Jones admits that "everyone stops paying attention to what a game looks like after a couple of hours of playing it," he says. So why is *Halo* going to be more filling than just a bowl of icing? Jones claims that the single-player game, which many shooters have abandoned in recent months, is going to be as good as any game out there. "We think we have a story that is so good," he says, "you could write a book about it and sell it as a sci-fi novel."

That's a bold claim, as a lot of games have fallen short of their literary aspirations. Furthermore, in the past few years, multiplayer online gaming, and the explosion of the mod community have upstaged the single-player experience. But Jones is just as confident that *Halo* will be a new standard in squad-based, multiplayer combat.

THE BUZZ

DEVELOPER: Bungie

PUBLISHER: Bungie

RELEASE DATE: Holidays 2000

It's what all the PC guys were talking about at E3. With awesome graphics, spot-on physics and an ingenious premise, it's the kind of game where we rip the box open with our teeth…when it's released.

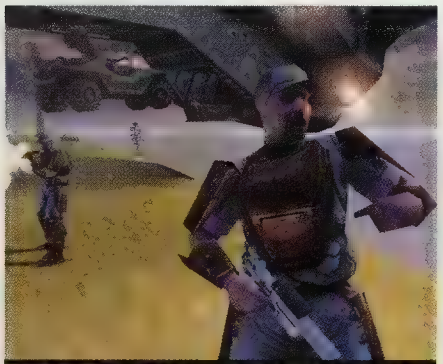
Not only will *Halo* feature indigenous life forms, but it will have a full weather system as well.

There will be a lot more to do than simple team deathmatch, as mods like *Counter-Strike* for *Half-Life* have shown that squad-level, class-based action can be a compelling experience. Jones is coy about the multiplayer features of *Halo*, but he promises us an experience more realistic and intense than you will find anywhere else.

The physics in *Halo* are quite simply stunning, with no detail overlooked — from the realistic ejection of spent cartridges, to the contrails of a missile drifting away in the breeze. This kind of attention to detail is brought to the vehicles, too, which are one of the most intriguing aspects of *Halo*. Although other games have used crafts as part of combat, Jones says, boasting, "Our vehicles are going to be ten times better [than anyone else's]."

Look for some multiplayer battles to start with one side establishing air superiority before ground troops begin their assault. And don't think that only the swift and the strong will rule on the battlefield. There will be a lot to do besides shoot the bad guys, including driving the vehicles, sabotaging the enemy's installations, and other forms of indirect support.

The coming months are going to be crowded with squad-based online shooters, so *Halo* is going to have to do a lot to distinguish itself from games like *Tribes 2* and *Team Fortress 2*, both of which have a proven track record as multiplayer games. So what is *Halo* doing to stand apart? Like many developers, Jones keeps his cards close to his vest because competitors could easily adopt the kind of gameplay innovations planned for *Halo*. "Things like [new technology] are easy to talk about," he says, "because they are hard to implement." But he promises that once the game is on our machines, we will be marveling not only at how it looks, but at how it plays.



Hand gestures will be important in multiplayer for communicating information in a short period of time.

NEW IDEAS

Like Bungie's previous game *Marathon* (a technologically impressive first-person shooter originally released for the Mac), the story will involve the active participation of an AI life form. Just before the main character lands on the ring planet — the halo-shaped world that gives the game its name — the AI will download itself into his cybernetic matrix, and become a sort of unseen supporting character. "The AI is actually with you all the time," Jones says. "Instead of saying 'Hey, there's a sniper lined up on your head,' she'll say 'Hey, there's a sniper lined up on *our* head.' I think that is really powerful emotionally, and will give us lots of interesting possibilities as designers."

Just as interesting is *Halo's* emphasis on a variety of tactics. Jones feels that the best games are those that allow gamers to choose how they want to play. So in *Halo*, you can solve a problem with a sniper rifle, a tank, or even air power. But don't expect to hit the quick-save button before launching an attack. Jones regards the unceasing saving and reloading as a tiresome style that should be abandoned. "We have a lot of really good ideas that allow you to have the experience of being constantly near death but without punishing the player with constant reloading," he says.

But he also admits that the *Halo* team is still undecided on some areas of the game,

Air battles will be an important part of the multiplayer experience.

The engine has been designed with an outdoor environment in mind. Only later did Bungie work on making realistic interiors.

such as camera placement. Sniping will be done in a first-person perspective because, "there's no other way to do it," he says. But the team is still debating the first/third-person issue. When driving a jeep, for instance, Jones is strongly committed to a third-person view. But won't that make it harder to run over the bad guys? "I don't think so," Jones says with a laugh. "It's sort of the same problem with parallel parking in real life; it's a lot easier to do in third-person. And running people over is the same thing. You have a much better idea of how big your car is and in what direction they are moving. But other players in the vehicle, like gunners, will be able to use a first-person view."

As in all team-based games, cooperation is going to be paramount, but Jones isn't rushing to embrace new technologies like voice-over-'net or the Powerplay protocol hyped by Valve but now conspicuously absent from the headlines. "One of the things that we are trying to do as much as possible," he says, "is eliminate the need for non-social communication in the game. The thing I am worried about is the modem player. Do you want your bandwidth taken up with some guy talking to you, or do you want your bandwidth to be used to line up your sniper shot?" If voice-over-'net makes sense, then "*Halo* will absolutely have it," but until then, he has adopted a wait and see attitude.

One thing that *is* certain about the game is that once it ships, you will be able to use Bungie's tools to create mods. *Halo* will come with a full-featured, C-based editor that will allow the mod community to take the game in different directions. Although the editor will most likely be pretty complicated — it is coming from the folks at Bungie, after all — casual coders will be able to reshape the game and perhaps do things even Jones never imagined.

As with most high-profile titles, the developers are reluctant to talk about release dates. Jones politely side steps the issue and assures us that it won't ship until it's done. That's fine, because it's games like *Halo* that make us buy shiny new rigs we can't afford and skip a day at work waiting for the DSL guy. This is one worth waiting for.

— Jim Preston

The Covenant Elite alien made its first appearance in the 10-minute E3 demo movie, which you can see on *The CD*.

The driver will have a third-person view, but the gunner on top will view the world from a first-person perspective.

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SCOOP!

Remedy went so far as to model the ballistics of bullets as realistically as possible, including ricochet angles and gravitational effects.

MAX PAYNE

Every once in a while, we see a game that completely blows us away. A game that just looks so damn cool that we can't stop talking about it. A game so bad-assed that we can't wait to play it. *Max Payne* is definitely one of those games.

When I was asked to do a two-page write up on *Max Payne*, I was tempted just to run a montage of screenshots along with two words: Holy Cow. But even that wouldn't do justice to the jaw-dropping beauty of *Max Payne* in motion. This third-person action game about a cop who loses his family and gets framed for murder all in the same week is stunningly cinematic.

Not all the environments will be run-down ghettos. Max will also wreck havoc in some posh hotels.

Sure, we had been given glimpses of the game before, but this year's E3 was the first time we've had the pleasure of seeing the gameplay incorporated with the mind-blowing graphics engine. As we walked into a air-conditioned trailer (a refreshing break from the madness of the show floor and the freak show that was the Gathering of Developers outdoor meeting place), we were greeted by Petri Jarvilehto (the Project Lead for *Max*) and his crew from Remedy. On two large, flat-screen monitors was the face of none other than Max Payne. It was the now-famous picture of him holding his 9mm Beretta with a "Go ahead, make my day" look on his face. What happened next absolutely floored us.

Jarvilehto touched the mouse and the screen *moved*. The picture was no piece of rendered wallpaper — it was live, *real time*! We looked on with our jaws hanging open as he zoomed into the gun to the point where you could read the serial number etched into the slide. He then panned around Max, *Matrix*-style. Next, he un-paused the game, fired off a shot, and then paused it again. He showed us the ejected

THE BUZZ

DEVELOPER: Remedy

PUBLISHER: Gathering of Developers

RELEASE DATE: When it's done

DEVELOPER INTERVIEW WITH...
Sam Lake, storywriter and game designer

What inspired you to make this game?
The in-depth film noir storyline, *Max Payne* as a hard-boiled detective-type character, and the stylistic Hong Kong action-movie gameplay all have their inspirational origins in the movies.

What will blow us away, and how is it taking those games that inspired it in new directions?
Our goal is the take gaming one step closer to the thrill of seeing a really good movie. That is not to say that we would be making compromises on the interactive side — quite the contrary. But all that will be backed up with a well thought-out screenplay with proper character development and atmosphere building, as well as photo-realistic actors and locations. We want to elevate the gameplay above the cartoon-like splatter-fest of many action games, and to bring it closer to the "action-ballet" of a stylized action flick.

If the Remedy folks don't release this game soon, we'll have to send this mean-looking guy after them.

brass casing, zoomed around it, and then moved the camera toward the space in front of the gun. We saw the 9mm slug floating just inches from the barrel. He zoomed into the bullet and we could see the imperfections in its full metal jacket. And this was just the beginning. A command was typed in, and Max was now holding a 12-gauge pump action shotgun. He fired off a shot, and the game was paused once again. The camera moved ahead of Max and we could see each *individual* pellet of buckshot. Things just got better from there.

Max was directed to enter a building. Then the camera pulled out, and out, and out. It was like the opening of *Fight Club* in reverse. We went from the bottom floor, through the upper floors, out the ceiling, and stopped when we had a bird's-eye view of the entire skyscraper, all without a single noticeable drop in framerate. This was on an Athlon 750 MHz system with a GeForce 256. The detail in the textures was insane. We were shown a dilapidated motel where tiles were cracked and crumbling, plaster was deteriorating, and wallpaper was fading. The models were also incredible. Characters had facial expressions, clothes blew in the breeze, and all the animation was smoother than silk. Still, nothing prepared us for what we were about to see next.

With our eyes glazed over and drool dribbling down our chins, we were introduced to the wonders of cinematic action sequences. At key moments within the game, these special sequences will kick in. You'll still play normally, but, on occasion, when you fire a gun, everything slows down and you're suddenly playing a cross between the best of John Woo and *The Matrix*. For example, you'll walk down a hallway, a bad guy will appear, you'll open fire, and everything slooowwws dowwwn. The camera zooms into the bullets and follows them until they hit their target. The bad guy falls down while the camera circles around him, and when he's dead, the camera goes back to its usual position. This continued as we saw half a dozen baddies dispatched in the same manner. For the finishing act, Max whips out a sniper rifle, zooms in on some sorry sod's head, and fires off a shot. The camera follows the bullet out of the barrel, across the street, to the roof of another building and shows it impact the head of your victim, knocking him off his feet.

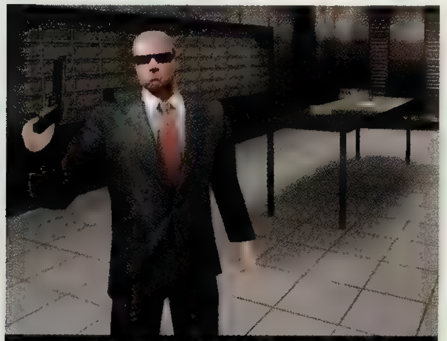
The next thing we knew, the lights were back on and the demo was over. Personally, I wanted to stay and watch it again. We stepped out into the sunlight and wondered how we were ever going to enjoy *Unreal Tournament* as much as we used too.

Sadly, no set release date was given, and there was no code in our hands. We set off back to our offices with visions of gunfight ballets in our minds. Mark my words — *Max Payne* will be to the gaming world what *The Matrix* was to Hollywood. We haven't seen a game yet that will compare with the style, flash, and plain old-fashioned coolness of Remedy's opus (if it makes good on its promises, that is). Perhaps Sam Lake, storywriter and game designer for *Max*, put it best when he told us that his goal was to create an "exciting thriller experience full of suspense and paranoia that we hope will leave the players breathless." We sure are.

— Li C. Kuo

All the muzzle flashes and smoke effects are fully volumetric. There will also be bilinear transmogrification — yeah, that's it.

It's a ballet of violence, and you get to be Baryshnikov.



No matter how mean these bad guys try to look, they'll still only end up as cannon fodder.

I've been called back to Wonderland,
It's darkened since I dreamed.
The Queen rules with an evil heart,
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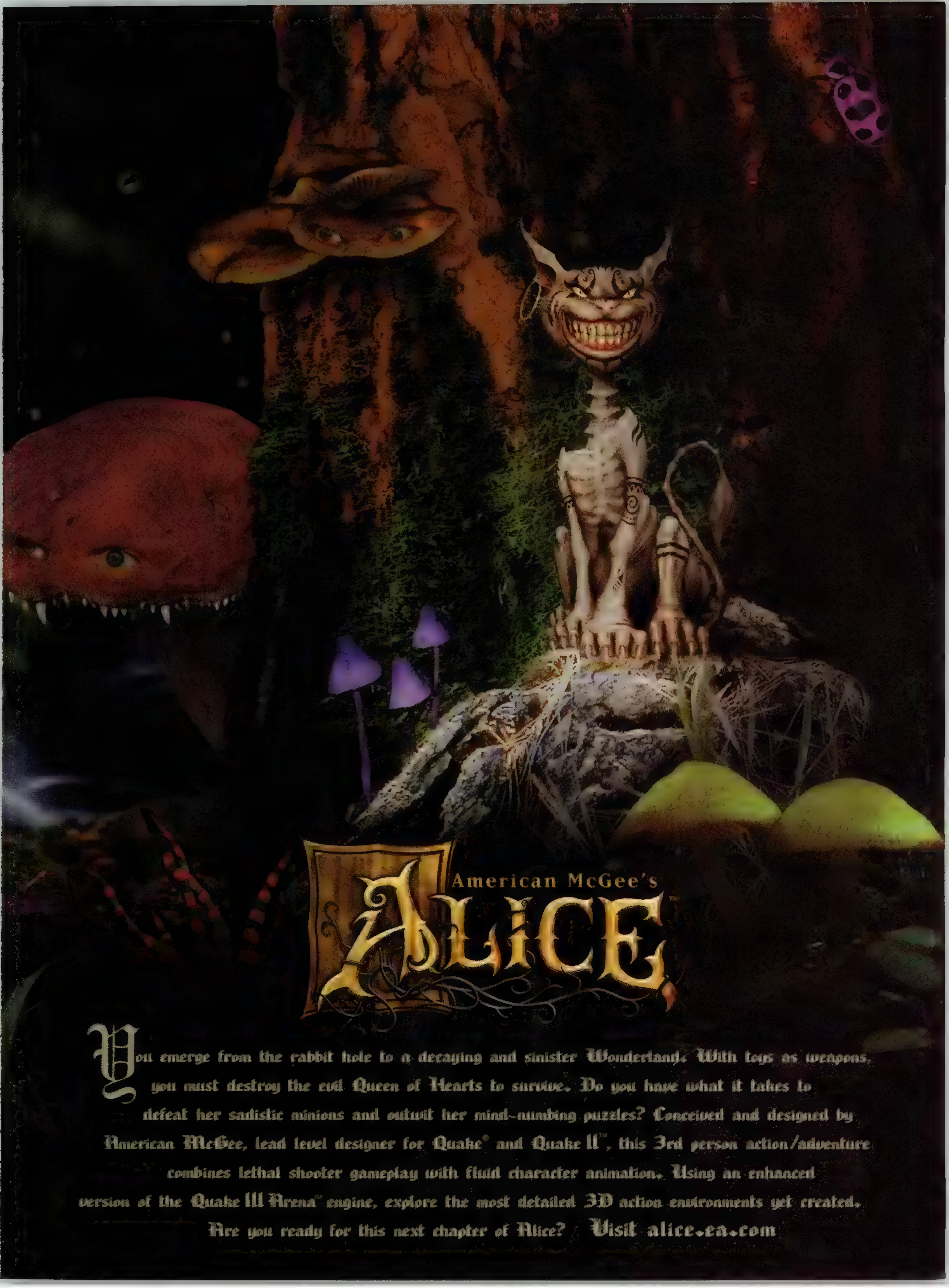
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Sigma

What do you get when you cross a cheetah and an elephant? That might sound like the setup to a bad joke, but the answer is only one of many possible animal combinations in *Sigma*. During a closed-door meeting with Relic at this year's E3, we got an exclusive look at what will undoubtedly be one of the most ambitious games of 2001.

Described as *"The Island of Dr. Moureau* meets *Indiana Jones," Sigma*, according to Alex Garden, CEO of Relic, is essentially *Homeworld* on an island, but the pulp fiction plot is light years away from last year's space epic. Set in 1933, you play Rex Chance — adventurer extraordinaire — on the trail of the missing Lucy Welling, a researcher who mysteriously vanishes while looking for humanity's "missing link" in a chain of tropical islands. Unbeknownst to Rex, she was actually developing experimental technology called Sigma, a means of combining animals into entirely new creatures. That is, until Upton Julius, our story's über-villain, takes Sigma for his own insidious uses, pitting Rex against Upton in an island battle of the animal hodge-podges.

Sounds far out? Besides the above movie inspirations, Garden admits that Sigma has been on his mind for years, ever since his childhood attempts to become a superhero failed miserably. "I tried mixing [household] ingredients to become Spiderman as a kid," he says. While he may not be a wall-crawling do-gooder, Relic's 25-year old boss vows to use his programming powers for good, not evil. Says Garden: "My goal is to make the first 15 minutes [of gameplay] absolutely exquisite."

And gameplay, as you may have guessed, is pure real-time strategy...with a twist. Instead of choosing pre-made units to fight your battles, you use Sigma technology and the available real-world critter population to assemble an army of totally unique amalgamations of two (or possibly more) animals and their characteristics. Imagine unleashing a swarm of piranha-bats upon your enemies, or a legion of rhino-wolves, and you'll immediately see the game's potential. And with 60 base beasties to choose from at release, you'll be able to create 15,000 total combinations (with even more available for download later on), making this the most unique RTS ever. Within the *Sigma* interface, you'll also get to decide which creature properties you want to be dominant — a tiger head/bat rear, bat head/giraffe rear — the choice is yours. Humans also get into the action in the form of island natives (whose worship of an animal deity can be turned to your advantage) and Upton's henchmen, but the main focus is on animal mayhem, not rehashing the sci-fi atrocity *Manimal*.

This concept art shows the potential of the morphing engine as two animals meld into one bizarre new creature.

Graphically, the game is as distinctive as its gameplay, creating what Garden calls a "dark Disney" feel — stylized, but not quite cartoonish. Set on massive island environments, battles are mostly land-based, though sea creatures still get their licks in (not underwater, but what about a fly/whale combo?). Some combos are just plain weird, yet eerily effective. Garden gleefully showed us one of his creations, a half-giraffe/half-chameleon hybrid, which turned out to be a hulking monstrosity whose brute power shocked even the *Sigma* design team.

And while it's still very early in the development stages, the same could be said about *Sigma* itself. It may sound like an odd combo now, and we all know that the inter-mingling of species can lead to disaster, but we fully expect to be overpowered by Relic's masterpiece-in-training come next year.

— *Chuck Osborn*

THE BUZZ

DEVELOPER: Relic

PUBLISHER: Microsoft

RELEASE DATE: Fall 2001

After developing *Homeworld*, our 1999 Game of the Year, the industry has been wondering what Relic and game god Alex Garden would do next. We have only one thing to say about *Sigma* — "Wow."

Hitman: Codename 47

DEVELOPER: IO Interactive

PUBLISHER: Eidos

RELEASE DATE: Third quarter 2000

Finally...a game that gives players the chance to live out their fantasy of being a killer-for-hire (and if our Design Lab entries are anything to go by, this is a hot topic with the kids). When *Hitman: Codename 47* was first shown to us six months ago, we were floored by the incredible physics engine and the interactivity of the environment. Little of the gameplay was on display, so the jury was still out.

Now we can safely say that IO Interactive is on track to deliver a potential blockbuster hit. Seeing the game in action had us itching for the release. After being assigned a job, the player is given total freedom as to how to complete it. Wanna go in and start blasting off limbs? Go right ahead. Feel more like hanging back with your sniper rifle and picking off your target from 100 yards away? You're covered. It's this wonderful combination of good looks, interactivity, and complete freedom that has us so excited about *Hitman*.

— *Li C. Kuo*

Being a hitman means that you'll have to kill anyone who gets in your way.

Commandos 2

Commandos: Behind Enemy Lines was a dream come true for strategy gamers looking for a little personality to go along with their tactical gameplay. Fans of *The Great Escape*, *The Guns of Navarone*, and other WWII-era buddy flicks enjoyed it too. The sequel could draw in the rest of the gaming community that stayed away from the first one...it looks that good.

Aside from tweaking gameplay (don't worry — this time out more than one character can perform the more mundane tasks, such as driving a car or rowing a boat), Pyro is making the game bigger, improving the artwork, and adding missions that involve prisoner of war camps and the infamous bridge over the River Kwai. Fans also will be treated to three new characters. Enter Paul "Lupin" Toledo, who is a master thief, "Natasha," whose special ability may involve her tight sweater, and a dog.

Pyro hasn't forgotten how the original game was received. Upon its release, *Commandos* was praised for its brilliant gameplay but equally reviled for its rather unforgiving difficulty and its emphasis on linear single-solution mission structure. Most gamers couldn't take the heat; it was just too hard. Tom Marx, U.S. producer for the Spanish-developed title, had this to say about the problem: "For the most part, the game will have multiple ways of completing puzzles. The enemies will have varying attributes and detection spheres; the environment will enable the player to evade and plan effective maneuvers to overcome the opposition."

With this structure, the game will be nearly impossible for players whose tactics aren't sound, but those with their tactical ducks in a row should have an easier time with it and be rewarded for their clever strategizing.

Sequels, by their very nature, aren't normally recognized for their innovative qualities, but in the case of *Commandos 2*, the opening up of the gameplay makes for what is almost an entirely different game...and one that delivers on the enormous potential shown by the original. Since we were fans of the first game, this one is high on our list of "must-haves" from the show.

— *Andrew S. Bub*

If fighting within the cities is too claustrophobic for your tastes, you're in luck...missions will take place in a variety of locales.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

GREG: By far, I thought that the most impressive game at the show was *Max Payne* from Remedy. Interestingly enough, the *Max Payne* engine is part of one of the benchmark programs I use to test computers and 3D cards when I'm reviewing hardware, and while I've always thought it looked nice, it's nothing compared to the real deal! In a word, amazing!

THE BUZZ

DEVELOPER: Pyro

PUBLISHER: Eidos

RELEASE DATE: February 2001

Look for new characters, new missions, better graphics, and a much more free-form style of play than the excellent (but too heavily puzzle-oriented) original.

DEVELOPER INTERVIEW WITH...
Tom Marx, U.S. producer

What inspired you to make this game?
The phenomenal success of *Commandos: Behind Enemy Lines* really inspired us. We wanted to build upon the existing formula that did so well for us and give gamers more. *Commandos 2* will deliver more fast-paced gameplay, introduce new characters, and provide tons of action.

What will blow us away, and how is it taking those games that inspired it in new directions?
Our goal with this game is to make it even more immersive than the original *Commandos*. We're utilizing the increased power of PCs to enhance virtually every aspect of gameplay. We have a completely new game engine that features playable interiors and rotatable environments. Supporting three different resolutions will also allow you to experience one of the most detailed and realistic environments you've ever seen in a game.

NASCAR Racing 4

DEVELOPER: Papyrus

PUBLISHER: Sierra Studios

RELEASE DATE: October 2000

If there's one name that's synonymous with hardcore racing simulations, Papyrus is it. From the moment this small group of die-hard racing fans (not to mention pretty talented programmers) wowed gamers with its original title, *Indy 500*, it gained the respect and admiration of the high-speed crowd. With the upcoming *NASCAR Racing 4*, that respect could turn into out-and-out worship.

The biggest change for the NASCAR series is a move to a new physics model. Similar in many ways to the model used in *Grand Prix Legends*, it will allow the cars to perform, and the driving sensation to feel, as realistic as possible. Although many complained about the difficulty of *GPL*, the much heavier, downforce-laden cars of *NASCAR* should be much easier to get the hang of than the tube shaped, airborne-prone vehicles in *GPL*. Prettier graphics (32-bit with resolutions up to 1680x1024) and the impressive computer driver AI that Papyrus has become known for should make this a must-have for anyone with a need for speed and a love of ovals.

— *Rob Smolka*

The new physics model in *NASCAR 4* will be the next best thing to a real 750hp stock car.

Pool of Radiance II

Ruins of Myth Drannor

Is the Pool of Radiance really the fabled Fountain of Youth? A decade ago, it was the launching point for SSI's popular Gold Box RPG series — the first to incorporate the insanely popular Dungeons & Dragons license. And at E3 this year, the fountain was showing its restorative powers — in this case, the rebirth of the classic series, with a fully modernized, *Baldur's Gate*-style isometric engine, and the promise of new 3rd Edition AD&D rules.

Pool of Radiance II picks up directly after the completion of the original series, with Elminster the mage sending your party to trace another, vanished group of adventurers. You'll cover nine intensively interactive square miles, including the ruined city of Myth Drannor and all its dungeons.

"There are many optional side quests in the single-player game," says senior producer, Jon Kromrey. "Even after you've won the game, you can still go back to the ruined city, meeting new NPCs who will join in solving any unfinished side-quests. You can also transfer your main character into multiplayer mode, where there are random dungeons."

The game's environment will contain numerous objects that can be used to block doors or advancing enemies — your party members can even jump on tables to acquire combat bonuses. "You'll be able to pause the game, examine your group, set your own movement formations, examine skills, spells, weapons-in-hand, and other options by simply right-clicking on each character. The interface is minimal so that players can immerse themselves in gameplay as soon as possible," says Kromrey. Manipulating the environment like this has been missing from the new breed of RPGs.

"What we can say [about the new 3rd Edition rules to be unveiled in August] is that there are new classes — including monks and sorcerers — as well as the ability to play a half-orc. We also have the new 3rd Edition spells (more than one hundred) and items, a better combat system, and the ability to have characters multi-class without racial restrictions...so if you want to have that female elf paladin/rogue/sorcerer/cleric, you can."

The new *Pool's* graphics as displayed at E3 were easily on par with the best we've seen in an RPG. Monsters awaiting combat are animated, rather than just standing in place. They may growl and stalk with impatience, but no more so than we ourselves, anticipating this game's fall release. *Pool of Radiance II: Ruins of Myth Drannor* looks to be the *re*-start of something big for SSI.

— *Barry Brenesal*

EDITOR'S CHOICE

JEREMY: I was completely charmed by Lionhead founder Peter Molyneux's demo of *Black & White*. Nothing on the floor looked anything like it. Sure, it's just a glorified Tamagotchi, but so is a small human child. The artificial intelligence alone will drop jaws the world over...not to mention the great fighting engine and revolutionary interface. Now, if they can just hit their September 26 ship date....

In battle, you'll be able to play in a full turn-based mode, which should go a long way towards conveying the feel of the D&D tabletop game.

THE BUZZ

DEVELOPER: Stormfront Studios

PUBLISHER: SSI

RELEASE DATE: Fall 2000

There have been plenty of games released that have used the D&D license, but none has quite captured the experience of the tabletop version...this may be about to change with *Pools of Radiance II: Ruins of Myth Drannor*.

DEVELOPER INTERVIEW WITH...

Jon Kromrey, senior producer

What inspired you to make this game?

SSI was the first to bring D&D to the PC, and this title represents our return to the D&D Gold Box series. This was a move we wanted to make for some time, so when Wizards of the Coast approached us to do a D&D game in 1998, we jumped at the chance.

What will blow us away, and how is it taking those games that inspired it in new directions?

The 3D character and monster animations, the new 3rd Edition D&D rules, the story, the interactive environment, and the random dungeons for multiplay will blow your socks off.

StarTopia

DEVELOPER: Mucky Foot

PUBLISHER: Eidos

RELEASE DATE: Fourth quarter 2000

Walking through E3, it might have been easy to overlook *StarTopia*, the futuristic strategy game from Mucky Foot, developers of *Urban Chaos*. At first glance, it doesn't appear special — in fact, you might mistake it for a *Dungeon Keeper* clone in space. While it is similar, Mucky Foot might well be on its way in creating one of the most fiendishly addictive strategic games you'll ever see.

In *StarTopia*, you're in control of a startup business operation concerned with reclaiming enormous abandoned space stations and making them profitable. To do that, you'll have to create rooms and facilities that will attract a wide variety of alien guests, from traders to laborers to tourists, all of whom have their own environmental needs, prejudices and, er, bodily secretions. You'll recover from disasters, fight off space pirates, and appease disgruntled tenants and rival corporations to become the ultimate galactic landlord. *DK* in space is not necessarily a bad thing.

— *Allan Rausch*

The "living world" of *Battle Realms* will feature truly interactive terrain.

Republic
The Revolution

Originality and breadth of ambition were unveiled secretly in a back-room at E3 this year. The host was Elixir Studios, and the game was *Republic: The Revolution*.

Secrecy is appropriate for this game, in which everything reeks of dark corners and hidden plots. You play a minor faction leader in one of the splinter nations resulting from the Soviet Union's breakup. There's a single supporter on your side, a tiny HQ, and some minuscule local support. Your goal: to escape this humble beginning and become the next president of a break-away Russian republic.

You can influence, subvert, recruit, and direct thousands of organizations and individuals, each with their own powers and goals. But you're not alone in your attempts to enlighten the masses — up to 16 other factions, human- or AI-controlled, will be doing everything they can to seize power themselves. And then there's the current President of Novistrana, utilizing the formidable state apparatus to retain control.

"We are attempting to create the richest game environment ever, simulating a full country down to every last detail with a million unique people. We want to challenge people's conception of what a game can be and do," says Demis Hassabis, Elixir Studios' founder (and co-creator of Bullfrog's *Theme Park*).

Novistrana's inhabitants will eat, sleep, work, and pick up their kids at school; each citizen will possess his/her own emotions, skills, loyalties, and beliefs that affect their reactions to events. Remember the old line about "the enemy of my enemy is my friend"? In *Republic*, you'll be tracking, befriending, and derailing a shifting ensemble of enemies of your enemies' enemies, and beyond.

Hassabis also promises a graphics engine capable of rendering an unlimited number of polygons in real time and special effects that include real-time light sources with self-shadowing models. There will be weather effects, day/night cycles, and a realistic physics engine that affects every game object and all possible interactions with the environment.

"Most of the new techniques we've come up with require a threshold level of power, but they are totally scalable," says Hassabis. "This means that if you have a gigahertz PC with a ninja graphics card, the game will produce some truly amazing results."

Sometime in 2001, the revolution will start. We're making a note, right now, not to let *Republic: The Revolution* begin without us.

— *Barry Brenesal*

Elixir claims that its Totality graphics engine is capable of rendering an unlimited number of polygons. See for yourself!

EDITOR'S CHOICE

DAN: Not only was it one of the prettier games on display at E3, but for sheer thrill power, *Max Payne* couldn't be beat. Slow-motion dives with guns blazing...count me in. The hard-boiled voiceover (which conveniently sets up the puzzles) sounds first-rate, too. I can't wait for this two-fisted noir epic.

THE BUZZ

DEVELOPER: Elixir Studios

PUBLISHER: Eidos

RELEASE DATE: 2001

If any game deserves the title of "Most Ambitious of Show," this is the one...and the competition is way back in the distance. In fact, every part of the game — the graphic engine, the AI, the depth of play — promises to put all the others to shame.

DEVELOPER INTERVIEW WITH...
Demis Hassabis, founder

What inspired you to make this game?
The original inspiration came from a board game called *Junta*. There are also elements in there from *Lords of Midnight* (an old Spectrum game) as well as the first edition of the *Illuminati* card game. We've also been heavily influenced by events such as the 1991 Communist uprising in Russia. We're attempting to capture the epic nature of these events and place them in a game.

What will blow us away, and how is it taking those games that inspired it in new directions?
We are attempting to create the richest game environment ever: you will be free to do anything you want that has an influence on the peoples' loyalties. We are simulating a full country down to every last detail, with a million unique people. All this is set in reality, here and now, against the cool backdrop of a decaying Soviet Union. We want to challenge the conception of what a game can be and do.

Crimson Order

DEVELOPER: Kinesoft

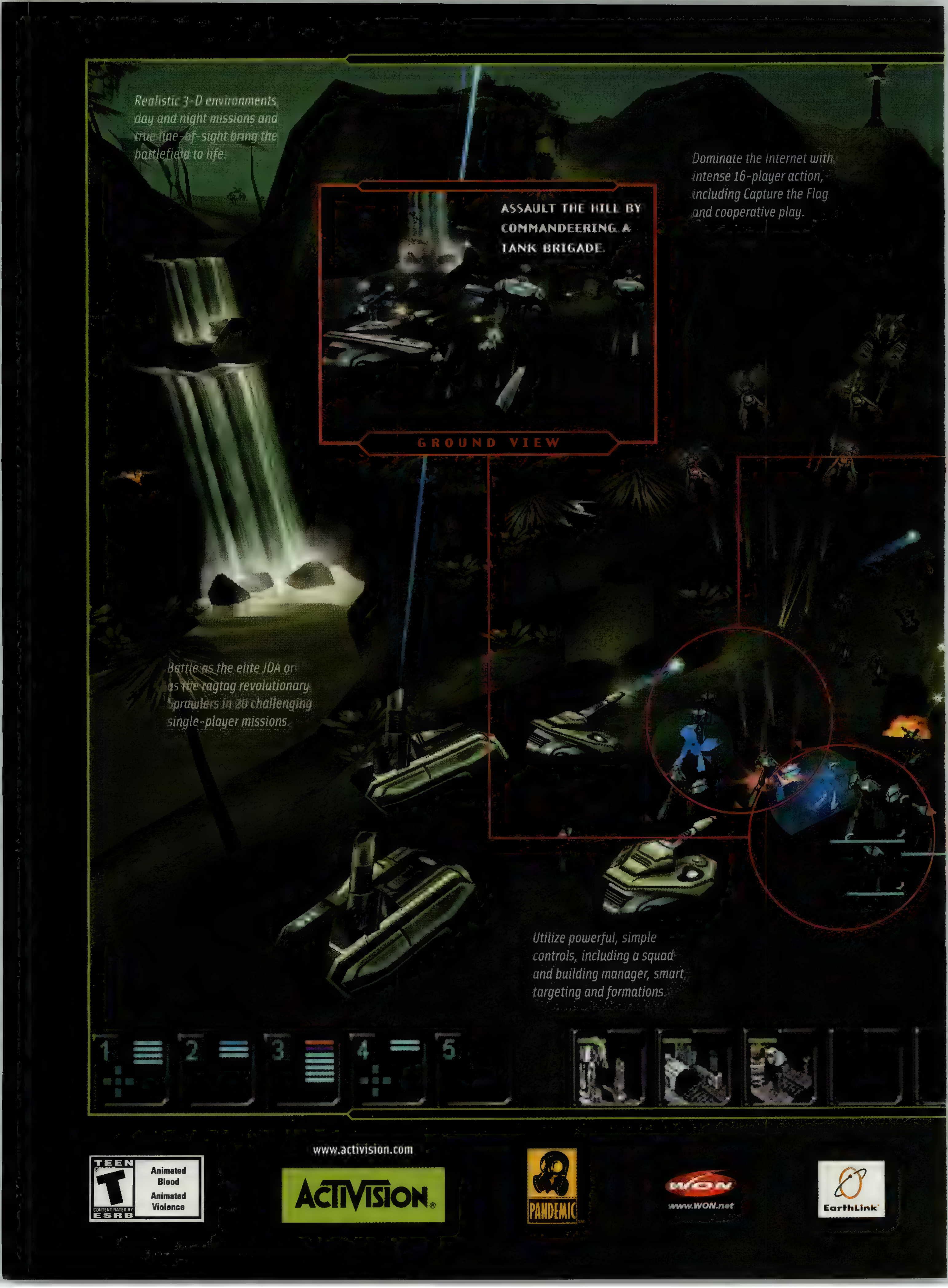
PUBLISHER: Kinesoft

RELEASE DATE: Early 2001

With a full schedule of appointments already booked, I was hesitant to agree to a meeting with the relatively unknown Kinesoft at this year's E3. Who were these guys anyway? As it turns out, the company is comprised of a group of industry standouts who were tired of the corporate politics at places like EA, MicroProse, and Interplay, and came to work at Kinesoft to get the creative freedom they craved. After seeing its upcoming game, *Crimson Order*, I'm glad I made that appointment.

The funny thing is, just looking at *Crimson Order* gives no hint as to how much potential the game has. Even describing it doesn't do justice: the graphics are clean and functional but nothing mind-blowing (top-down, 3D view), the gameplay isn't revolutionary (squad-based tactical combat), and the story is far from original (it's the far future, the humans are fighting against an evil alien race, etc.). So why is this a game that we think you'll need to look out for down the road? What stood out was how the enemies and the players not directly under your control performed, even at such an early stage of the development process. Playing through an early level gave us all the right feelings in all the right places that something special in progress. It's still a long way off, but if things go as I think they will, and if the gaming public can get over its fixation with eye-candy, Kinesoft may show the gaming world that gameplay still is king.

— *Rob Smolka*



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YOUR TROOPS.
GROUND VIEW

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Battle Isle

The Andosia War

For most gamers, the announcement of yet another real-time strategy game is about as exciting as hearing that the sun is predicted to rise tomorrow. But a strategy game that *combines* turn-based combat with real-time economic and production components is a whole 'nother story — and that's precisely what Blue Byte and Slovakian game developer Cauldron have done with *Battle Isle: The Andosia War*, the fourth installment in the long-running series. And Blue Byte should know something about appealing to fans of turn-based play: *Incubation*, a squad-level combat game set in the Battle Isle universe, garnered *PC Gamer*'s Turn-Based Strategy Game of the Year for 1997.

In addition to the intriguing idea of combining turn-based and real-time play to extract the maximum benefit from each, environmental effects will increase the depth as well. Combat and production will be susceptible to the elements: poor weather limits unit visibility, solar plants can't generate power at night, low tides decrease output of tidal power plants, and so on.

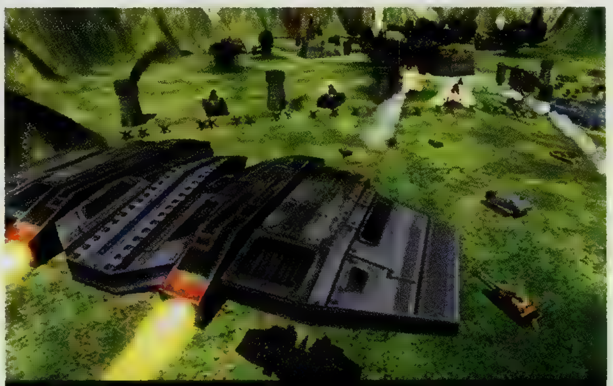
Another exciting design feature is that it optimizes the use of a 3D game world and user-controlled camera angles. "We realized that 3D really made sense in this setting," says project manager Wolfgang Walk "You can obtain a lot of important information when you have time to look around. In a real-time battle, you'd have never the time to do that — viewing a battle from different angles usually puzzles you because of time pressure."

Another advantage is that battle resolutions can be given a cinematic flair. "We're able to present the explosions and all of the battle scenes because it doesn't matter if the computer takes over the camera for a short while," Walk says. "You couldn't do that in a real-time game because it's necessary for the player to have total control all of the time."

This is definitely not a "me too" game: it has the potential to be one of the compelling strategy titles of the year.

— *Stephen Poole*

The computer takes control of the camera during the resolution of battle, lending a cinematic atmosphere.



With the turn-based action of *The Andosia War*, you have the luxury of watching battles from any camera perspective.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

SMOKE: As an old-school fan of the *Dungeons & Dragons* games, I was almost brought to tears by both *Pool of Radiance II* and *Neverwinter Nights*. I can't wait to try out the new Third Edition rules. I was almost brought to tears once again by the dearth of sports games at the show…at least there's still EA Sports.

THE BUZZ

DEVELOPER: Cauldron

PUBLISHER: Blue Byte

RELEASE DATE: Third quarter 2000

Battle Isle: The Andosia War combines the best aspects of turn-based and real-time play to create a strategy game that's unlike anything that's come before it.

DEVELOPER INTERVIEW WITH...
Wolfgang Walk, project manager

What inspired you to make this game?
Few games inspired us. Our inspiration came from more of a general sadness about the state of turn-based gameplay. We were definitely looking to develop something that offered a new angle to turn-based gamers.

What will blow us away, and how is it taking those games that inspired it in new directions?
Our design parameter was "what adds tactical depth if we do it in turns, and what doesn't?" These two rules led to the entire concept. We realized it would be really quite simple to merge turn-based tactical gameplay and real-time economics to provide a thrilling experience where you're no longer waiting a long time until your opponent has finished his turn — during that time you must tend to the economic side or your units will quickly run out of supplies.

Rune

DEVELOPER: Human Head Studios

PUBLISHER: Gathering of Developers

RELEASE DATE: Summer 2000

Blood from the enemies will splatter on you after an especially nasty kill.

Psst, hey, you — yeah you, the guy with the mouse playing *Unreal Tournament*. Don't you ever get tired of running around with that rocket launcher? Sure, *UT* is a good game, but there's more to gaming than futuristic shooters. Take *Rune*, for example. When was the last time you played a young Viking with a grudge to settle? When was the last time you took a two-foot-wide sword and hacked off someone's head with it? When was the last time you lopped off your opponent's arm, picked it up, and proceeded to club his brains out with it?

These are just some of the thrills in store for you in Human Head's upcoming *Rune*. The massively enhanced *Unreal* engine should tell you all you need to know about how the game is going to look (in a word: sweet!), but when you top things off with some of the most downright brutal hand-to-hand combat you've ever seen...well, you're looking at what could be one of the most enjoyable bloodbaths of the year.

— *Li C. Kuo*

Black & White

For years, gaming editors have been moping about the lack of originality in game design. Of course, since about 1998 we've been putting asterisks next to those grumblings to recognize the work being done by Peter Molyneux and his team at Lionhead Studios. E3 was our latest chance to see *Black & White* as it really begins to take shape. And believe us — what was once just a bunch of nifty concepts and some screenshots is now forming into a jaw-dropping, oh-so real game.

For those of you still unfamiliar with the premise of *Black & White*, here it is: A god-like magician (that's you) is overseeing an isolated island from a citadel stronghold. Just as in Molyneux's *Populous*, you can shape your environment in awe-inspiring ways — making volcanoes rise from the ground if you want, or just starting some impressive forest fires. Your power is dependent on the worship of the natives, which you can increase through benevolence or raw fear. (Hence the title — your reign will either be one of harmonious love for your subjects, or pure malevolent "Respect my author-i-tay!" tactics. It's up to you.) There are enemy mages on the island who are competing with you for the hearts and souls of the natives. To do battle with them and assert your spiritual dominance, you can choose from among different tribes to control, and access the different spells granted by each.

But the real focus of *Black & White*'s gameplay will be on the care and nurturing of your creature. The creatures are magically crafted mutations of the animal kingdom that will be blessed with some of the most advanced AI ever seen in a computer game. Creatures will learn as they grow, responding to the way you "raise" it. For example, if your big ape-toddler goes on a rampage and squashes a hapless villager, you can smack him in the face to tell him this was bad behavior. He may get spiteful and squash another person, but if you keep up the smacking, eventually he'll learn that squashing humans is bad. (Or, alternately, you could reward such mayhem with tickles and rubs controlled with a *Dungeon Keeper*-like hand icon, thus fostering a truly evil monster.)

The last thing anyone needs to see in the morning is a colossal evil tortoise.

THE BUZZ

DEVELOPER: Lionhead Studios

PUBLISHER: EA Games

RELEASE DATE: September 2000

When Peter Molyneux announced his ambitious plans for *Black & White*, we could only guess as to how much of the bold design document would actually translate into a game. All we knew was that if it *could* be pulled off, *Black & White* might change the industry forever.

DEVELOPER INTERVIEW WITH...
Peter Molyneux, designer

What inspired you to make this game?
To take some of the elements from my past games and combine them with the most realistic AI possible.

What will blow us away, and how is it taking those games that inspired it in new directions?
The advanced AI will allow for some amazing things. For instance, if you stick any music CD into the computer, the creature will recognize the beat and dance appropriately to it. These will be smart little guys. If one of the villagers gets picked up and thrown by a creature, a crowd will form around the dead guy to stare in horror; and they'll start giving the creature a *very* wide berth. Plenty of events during the game will occur that we haven't even planned on, because the AI is reactive to its surroundings.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

LI: Clearly, the best game of E3 was *Team Fortress 2*. No other game came close. It was so good, in fact, that they didn't even bother to show it at E3. And I'm still excited about it! But if I had to nail it down to one game that actually *was* at E3, it'd have to be *Max Payne*. It's all about the cinematic shoot-outs!

Molyneux's ultimate vision is for a massively multiplayer *Black & White* universe where gamers can unleash their creatures to interact with each other. What we've seen of the game so far has been more than encouraging... it's been electrifying. It's refreshing that after putting faith in Molyneux's vision from the get-go, the gameplay seems like it may even exceed our expectations. We can't wait to get our hands on it when that September release date rolls around!

— Daniel Morris

MechWarrior 4

DEVELOPER: Microsoft

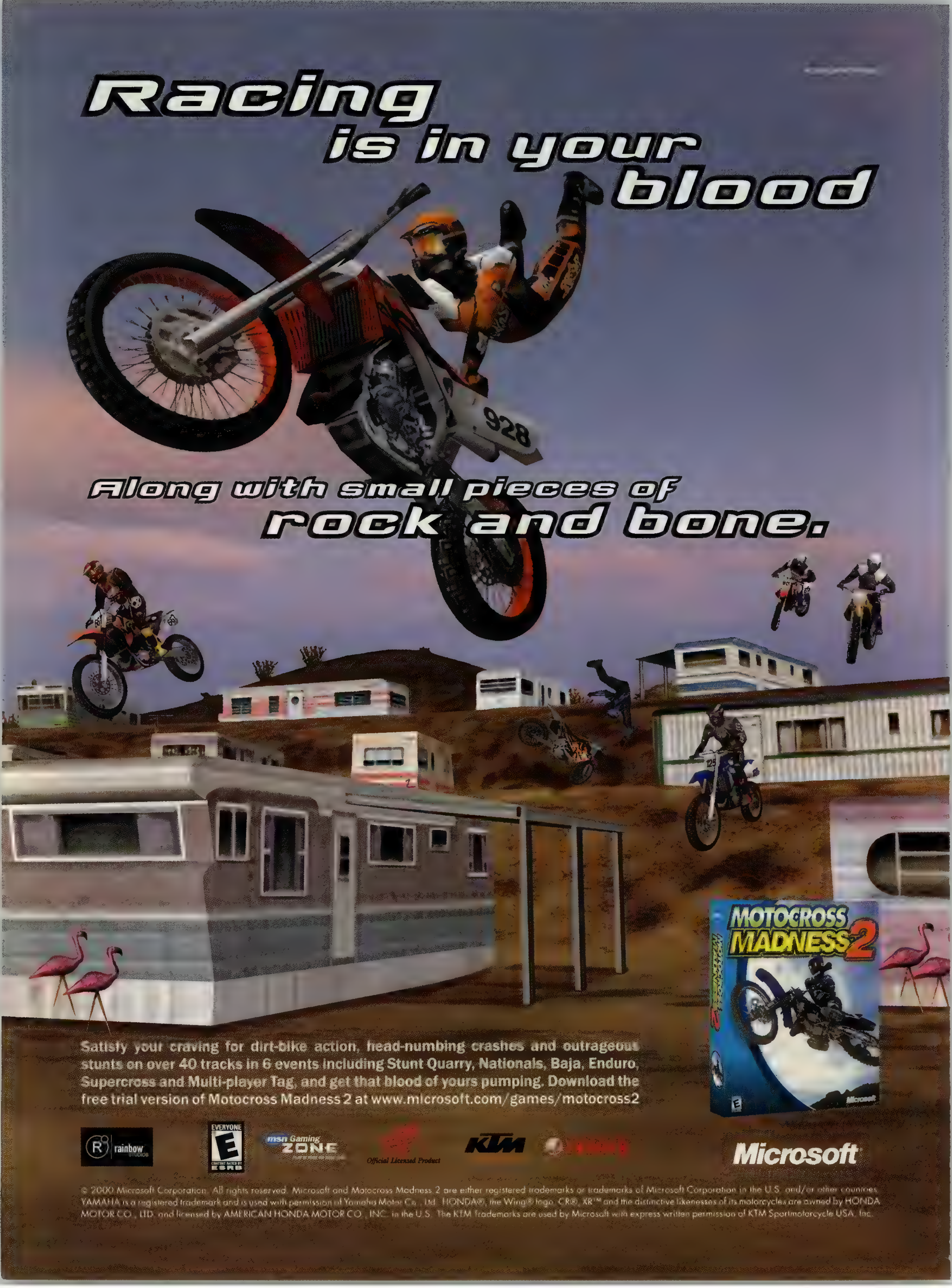
PUBLISHER: Microsoft

RELEASE DATE: Fourth quarter 2000

As always, mechs are customizable from their PPC cannons to their jumpjets.

You can never have too much of a good thing, and the MechWarrior series is definitely a good thing. Ever since *MechWarrior 2*, the world of Battletech has brought us endless hours of gaming fun. As the series has developed, so has the gaming marketplace. So for iteration four, Microsoft is giving the series a more accessible, action skew. While the simulation is all still there in spades, the control and loadout options have been streamlined to help you get to the meat of the action that much quicker. This is also the most beautiful version of the game yet, but there are some real brains behind those hi-res pixels. You'll now have to chance to lead a team of mechs, decide how to deploy them, which battles to fight, and which mechs to use. Seven never-before-seen mechs will also be added to the roster for a total of 21 playable brutes.

— Li C. Kuo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Tropico

What would you call a game that simulates all of the really fun aspects of being Presidente-for-life of a small South American-type country — you know, putting down revolutions, building up tourism while exploiting the peasants, strip-mining the rain forest? Banana Republic seems like the obvious choice. Unfortunately, according to the game's producer, Phil Steinmeyer, "It turned out that the famous clothing store doesn't have much of a sense of humor." That's why, when you assume your office in PopTop's new strategy game, you'll be playing *Tropico*.

Steinmeyer says he was definitely inspired by classic city-building games like *SimCity*, but rather than just being a "software toy," *Tropico* looks like it will have more gameplay than you can shake a scraggly bearded, cigar-chomping, Third World dictator at. The goal is to keep your economy healthy and your people happy, but how you go about is up to you. When you take over, the country is struggling. With your limited starting funds, you'll need to lead your people into prosperity. The economic portion of the game rests on three legs: tourism, resources, and industry. However, just like in real life, you'll have to make trade-offs — for instance, industrial development has environmental consequences that can hurt tourism.

Of course, you'll have to make concessions when it comes to your citizens as well, adding onion-like layers to this deep strategy game. "Each citizen on your island has approximately 50 characteristics that are affected by things like hunger, thirst, employment, the environment, and more," says Steinmeyer. Each person also has a job and political convictions that need to be played one against another to keep the island working. According to Steinmeyer, though, no matter how you choose to govern your island, you'll eventually tick off some faction. If you appease the army by oppressing the peasants, for example, you'll definitely make an enemy of the church.

The game is running on a "vastly upgraded" version of the *Railroad Tycoon II* engine, and the detail of the people and buildings is striking. There are more than 100 structures to build, ranging from cigar factories to tourist traps like high-class hotels. But the real appeal is running our own socialist paradise and messing with its citizens. PopTop proved it has serious strategic chops with the brilliant update of Sid Meier's classic *Railroad Tycoon* — we're thinking that lightning is going to strike twice when *Tropico* hits shelves.

— Allan Rausch

EDITOR'S CHOICE

ROB: Without a doubt, *Max Payne*'s visceral impact was amazing. Hopefully the hands-on playing experience will match the stunning effects and detail etched in the powerful engine. Of course, *Black and White* looked amazing, and for online RPG fanatics, *Neverwinter Nights* is likely to be the next big addiction.

The graphics engine is the same one that was used in *Railroad Tycoon II*; PopTop has added a wealth of enhancements to it.

THE BUZZ

DEVELOPER: PopTop Software

PUBLISHER: G.O.D./Take Two

RELEASE DATE: Early 2001

DEVELOPER INTERVIEW WITH...

Phil Steinmeyer, producer

What inspired you to make this game?

I lived in Brazil as a kid in a very nice community that was sheltered from what was going on in the rest of the country. I remember wondering why thick concrete walls that had glass shards embedded in them surrounded my development. As I got older, the great contradictions of Latin America fascinated me, with great wealth next to shocking poverty and the legitimate tourist industry operating near cocaine processing plants. If you look over the history of the region, you'll find every kind of government from stable democracies to tottering military juntas.

What will blow us away, and how is it taking those games that inspired it in new directions?

Gamers will love the depth of interaction with their citizens and the various factions that they represent. Unlike other city-building games, there's no "best" way to play the game and win; every choice you make has consequences but every choice can also lead toward victory. If you create an egalitarian society, certain classes like doctors and generals will resent their lack of status; if you create a stratified society, you risk revolt by the poor. There's always something going on, there's always something to deal with, and with close to 500 personalities on your island, it comes closer to simulating a real government than any game that's ever come before it.

Sheep

DEVELOPER: Mind's Eye

PUBLISHER: Empire Interactive

RELEASE DATE: Fall 2000

Is it possible for a sheep-herding game to be fun? Apparently so. In fact, the highly original puzzle concept of *Sheep* is not only fun, but genuinely funny, too. The premise is suitably absurd: aliens crash land on Earth and take a liking to the grass. They stay, and become known to mankind as sheep. Wanting to regroup their flock, the aliens return and infuse four humans with herding skills and task them with getting the sheep back to the ship.

Yep, that's all true. What it means in gameplay terms is that you run around an array of incredibly inventive levels packed with sheep-mashing tricks and traps, "shouting" at the little darlings to guide them through to the exit in safety. Along the way there are power-ups to help out. If this all smacks of a new take on *Lemmings*, you'd be right on the nose.

Who knew that being a sheep-herder could be so much fun? Get along, little doggies!

The levels are packed with crazy humor — sheep turned into ice cream, electrocuted, eaten, smashed, bashed, and grabbed. Delaying the game from its initial release timeframe has paid off with levels that offer more detailed textures and interesting puzzles. As a time-sucker, *Sheep* has all the potential to eclipse the success of *Lemmings*.

— Rob Smith

Escape from Monkey Island

It is a time of great rejoicing and jubilation in the *PC Gamer* offices. Lisa is doing the mambo on her desk, and Smoke has decided to dedicate his life to charity for poor orphans. Why? An old friend, long thought dead, has returned. That's right, a new adventure game is on the way...but not just any adventure game. This is a new Monkey Island game from the comedy power house at LucasArts.

Escape From Monkey Island is the fourth in what is one of the funniest and most enjoyable adventure game series ever. It's a sure bet that the moment a playable version arrives in our offices, we'll pounce on it like a pack of rabid wolves on a furry little bunny covered with hickory barbecue sauce (mmm...barbecue-sauce-covered bunny).

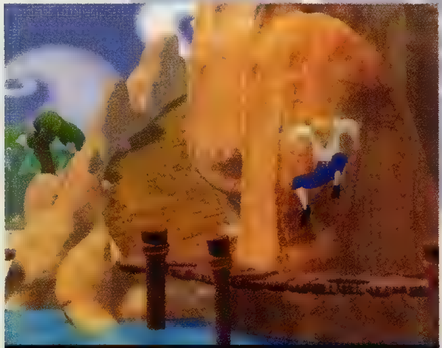
This marks the series' entry into the world of three dimensions. The engine's pedigree is already assured, since it's the same one that was used for the outstanding *Grim Fandango*. The gameplay pedigree is just as secure...it's being developed by the creators of LucasArts' classic (and downright hilarious) *Sam & Max Hit the Road*.

So, what can we expect from this classic-in-the-making? More puzzles, more fun, and more monkey-lovin' antics, for starters. *Escape from Monkey Island* takes off after the events of *The Curse of Monkey Island*. Guybrush Threepwood and Governor Elaine Marley are now married and leading a fine pirate and wife life until disaster strikes once again. When they return from their honeymoon, they discover that somehow, Elaine Marley has been declared dead, her mansion is scheduled for demolition, and a slick politician named Charles L. Charles is looking to take over her job. Now it's up to our hero Guybrush to sort things out.

The LucasArts team gave us a few hints about what to expect, and without giving away too much, we'll just say that there'll be some run-ins with experimental prosthetic devices, a plan to wipe out the Tri-Island Area, and something known only as the "Ultimate Insult." When asked about what the most exciting part of *Escape from Monkey Island* would be, co-project lead Michael Stemmle said this: "The reference card is a work of genius. That and the finale, which we guarantee to be at least twenty times bigger than the endings of the previous Monkey Island games...combined!"

You'll have to excuse us now — we're forming a task team to go and swipe that reference card from the LucasArts stronghold.

— Li C. Kuo



Can you believe this guy can hold his breath for ten whole minutes? Wow!

Rest assured, there will be plenty of monkeys in *Escape from Monkey Island*. Maybe Coconut Monkey should sign on as an extra.

THE BUZZ

DEVELOPER: LucasArts

PUBLISHER: LucasArts

RELEASE DATE: Fall 2000

DEVELOPER INTERVIEW WITH...

Michael Stemmle and Sean Clark, co-project leaders

What inspired you to make this game?
An image of Guybrush Threepwood's three dimensional head appeared to us in a tortilla.

What will blow us away...
That's a tricky question. Some people might be blown away by the sight of a frilly pink pirate ship. Others will get their juices pumped by the spastic antics of a tightrope-walking termite. Still others might find that the simple grace of a character's conversational gestures floats their boats. Or it could just be the monkeys; everyone loves monkeys.

...and how is it taking those games that inspired it in new directions?
It's not. We're just trying to make the best darned Monkey Island game we can.

Battle Realms

DEVELOPER: Liquid Entertainment

PUBLISHER: Crave

RELEASE DATE: September 2001

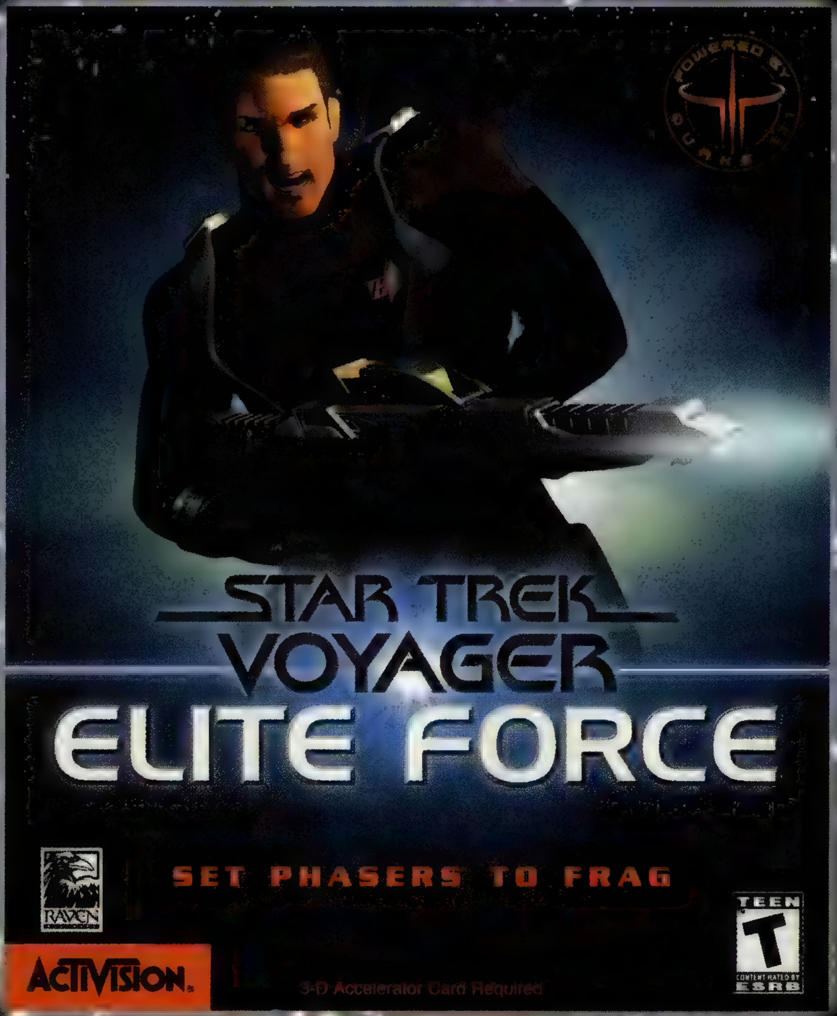
The "living world" of *Battle Realms* will feature truly interactive terrain.

Battle Realms is a real-time strategy game set in a fantasy version of feudal Asia. Influenced by martial arts movies and spectacular Japanese cinema, *Battle Realms* features a wild visual style that merges traditional "medieval" military units with a dark-fantasy sensibility.

Designer Ed Del Castillo hopes to craft an RTS that doesn't rely on what he calls "a race to production." Streamlining the economic model that turns so many RTS games into a button-clicking factory frenzy, *Battle Realms* will worry more about the human elements of the genre. The goal of the design team is the creation of a "living world" where the characters are living actual lives, as opposed to merely standing around waiting to be ordered onto a construction project. Townspeople will go about their daily lives, and your interactions with the game world will be much more realistic than in the typical click-'em-all style of RTS. This sounds like a welcome change indeed, and one that will hold our intrigue as we settle down for the long wait until its release.

— Daniel Morris

COMING SOON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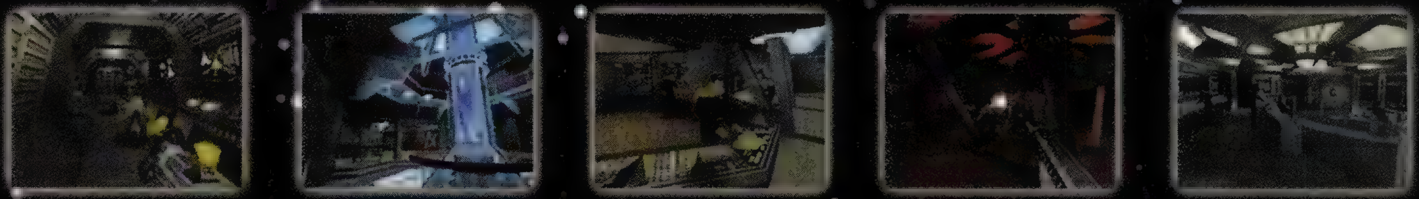

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Crimson Skies

DEVELOPER: Zipper Interactive **PUBLISHER:** Microsoft **RELEASE DATE:** Fall 2000

Microsoft had quite a few cakes in the oven at this year's E3, but none looked tastier than *Crimson Skies*. We're all about derring-do here at *PC Gamer*, and seeing experimental planes buzz through the Hollywood sign got our attention. But when one pilot got out of the cockpit, walked across the wing, shot another guy and took *his* plane, then our mouths became all juicy at the prospects.

Set in an alternative, 1930's universe, *Crimson Skies* features loads of backstory thanks to an already released pen and paper version, and with a stylish swing band soundtrack, it got us in the mood for a little barnstorming through L.A. Players get to take to the air in frantic, deathmatch-style dogfights and pull the trigger on some cool weapons like flashbombs and ceramic bullets.

The action sequences have been designed to let the player feel like a real hero, rather than a frustrated joystick-jock trying to learn how to control a real plane. The physics of flight that are employed can best be described as "forgiving," allowing for impressive acrobatic maneuvers by even the greenest of pilots...we can't wait to zip around Zeppelins and fly through the flak. We've always liked our cake with extra icing, and *Crimson Skies* looks like it will provide several layers worth.

— *Jim Preston*

Crimson Skies **is not your run-of-the-mill flight sim; scenarios like this will be commonplace.**

Madden NFL 2001

[illegible] EA Sports [illegible]SHER: EA Sports **RELEASE DATE:** Fall 2000

Under normal circumstances, this game wouldn't make a "Best of Show" list. But as one of the few upcoming PC sports games, and one of even fewer that were actually on display, *Madden 2001* wins almost by default.

Don't get me wrong...I expect this to be an excellent game based on the fact that it will play a hell of a lot like last year's model. The problem, at least according to the press sheet and my time spent talking with the development team, is that it's probably going to play *exactly* like last year's game! The feature list is overflowing with eye-candy like putting the coaches on the field (complete with them making comments to the players and referees), higher-res player models with specific gear like wristbands and such, and a completely redesigned interface (okay, maybe all is not lost...if there's one thing this franchise needed, it's a new interface...last year's was just putrid). Actual gameplay improvements are virtually non-existent.

Madden NFL 2001 does *look* great, though. The models that were created for the PlayStation 2 were used for the PC version, and the animation looks smoother than ever (there's still the occasional ball that's caught with the back of the receiver's head, but it's much less frequent than we've seen in the past). Your retinas are guaranteed to be pleased by the eye-candy.

— *Rob Smolka*

The PC version of *Madden 2001* will benefit from the beautifully rendered PlayStation 2 models.

Neverwinter Nights

[illegible] BioWare [illegible] Interplay **RELEASE** [illegible] November 2000

As one of the first games fully to integrate the Advanced Dungeons & Dragons Third Edition rules set, you know from the start that *Neverwinter Nights* is aiming for a very high bar in the world of roleplaying games. But it's the game's online roleplaying potential, and some graphic treats that elicited the most oohs and ahhs at E3.

We probably shouldn't have been surprised (after all, it's from the team that crafted *Baldur's Gate 2*), but we were. The moveable camera lets you swoop around a gloriously rendered 3D game world, with some of the best dynamic lighting we've ever seen. Torchlight flickers realistically and casts gloomy real-time shadows, reflecting off any armor plating, adding tons of atmosphere to the fantasy setting.

The gameplay plan is to put up to 64 players into one game area at a time with a DM that can inhabit the form of just about any character in the module, so that players will never know when they're dealing with a scripted NPC or when the DM is actually influencing the storyline. This last feature alone puts *Neverwinter Nights* on top of a lot of roleplaying fans' lists as it's the nearest recreation of the interactive tabletop D&D gaming experience.

We're anxious to see what tools the module-creation kit gives to aspiring Dungeon Masters the world over.

— *Dan Morris*

World-class lighting technology will make *Neverwinter Nights*' spell effects really sing.

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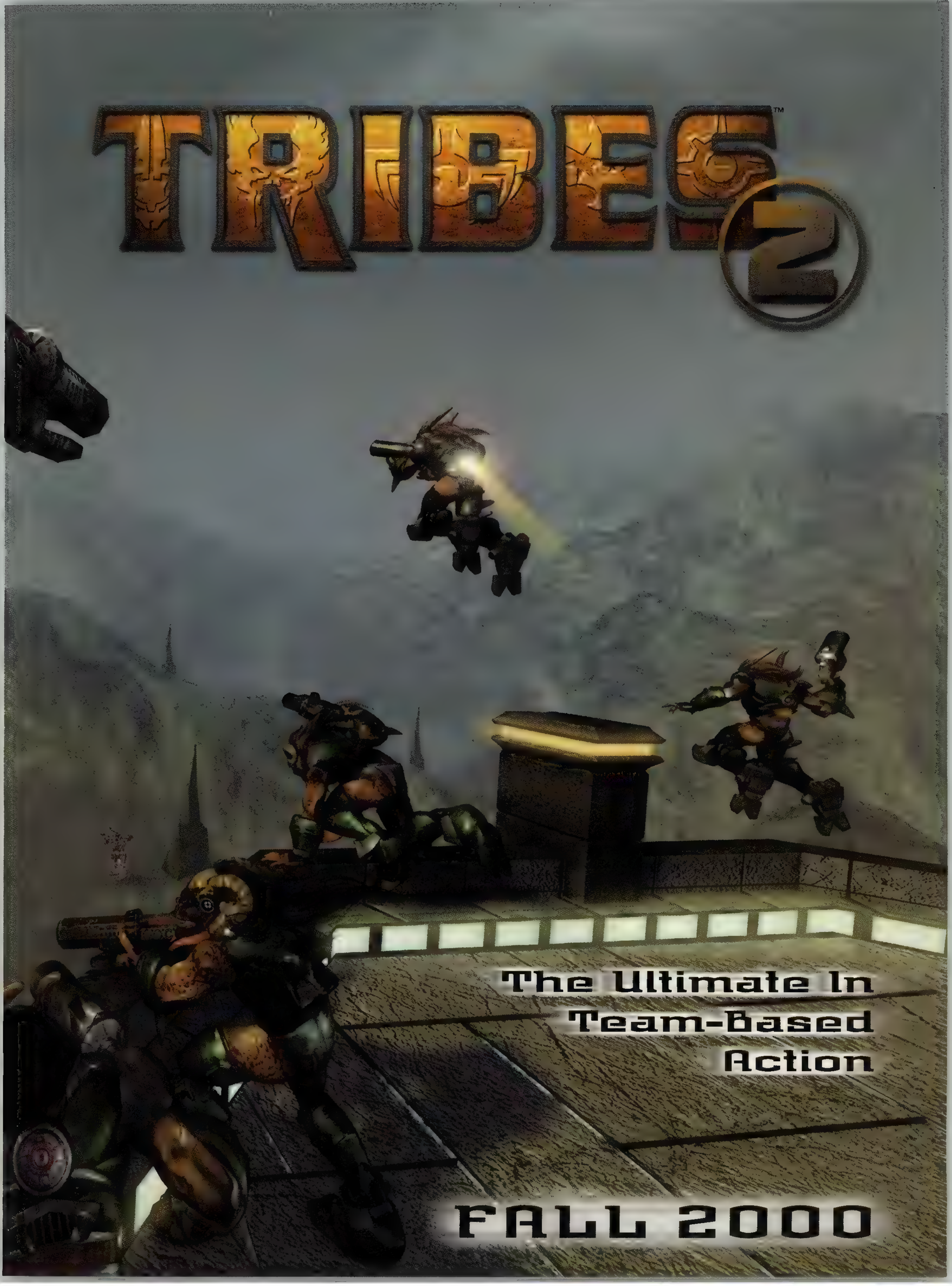
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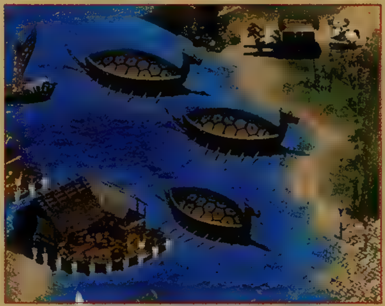

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Animated Blood
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Broken Looking Glass

One of gaming's greatest developers is no more

We're sad to announce that Looking Glass Studios has gone out of business. From the early days of the groundbreaking *Ultima Underworld* (back then, the company was known as Blue Sky Interactive) to its latest masterpiece, *Thief II*, Looking Glass has put a smile on the face of many a gamer. In between, we've been treated to the likes of such classics as *Ultima Underworld 2, System Shock, Flight Unlimited*, and *Terra Nova*. Truly, this group was one of the best development companies ever, with many of its games earning high honors among the gaming press.

Looking Glass was eventually brought down by financial hardships. While *Thief II* did well on store shelves, it just couldn't offset the losses from previous years. The developer's partnership with Eidos fell through after both companies posted financial losses. We find it rather disconcerting that a game like *Frogger* can be one of the top ten best-selling games of the year while a company that creates some of the best titles ever is forced to go out of business.

Upcoming Looking Glass projects such as *Thief II Gold* and *Thief III* have been cancelled. All is not lost, however; dedicated fans are still working on unofficial add-ons to *Thief II* and more fan projects are in the works. Go to *www.digital-nightfall.com/cosas/* to get the latest info. Also, take a look at this month's Extended Play column for more on unofficial *Thief II* expansion packs.

So far we have been unable to reach anyone from Looking Glass Studios for a comment. However, it's a safe bet that most Looking Glass employees will find work with other development houses. Hopefully, this infusion of talent into the industry will benefit a new generation of PC games. So here's to Looking Glass Studios and all the years of gaming goodness that they gave us. We'll miss you guys…sniff.

Thief: The Dark Project
Great engine

System Shock — Classic

EVER HEARD OF **TERRA NOVA?**

In our May 1996 issue, we reviewed a little game called *Terra Nova*. This classic Looking Glass game got a very impressive 90 percent and received an Editors' Choice award. The gameplay was like a cross between *Delta Force* and *MechWarrior 2*. We weren't the only ones who were impressed. *Terra Nova* met with almost unanimous critical acclaim throughout the industry. Unfortunately, the game was a major bomb on store shelves. It's yet another example of a quality game from Looking Glass that has been sadly overlooked these past few years. If you see it in a bargain bin, buy it!

Microsoft on the Future of PC Gaming

A few words with Games Division VP Ed Fries

To complement our feature on the "State of the PC Union" (see page 58), we discussed that future with Ed Fries, vice president of Microsoft's Games Division, and the bright spark behind Microsoft's great-looking PC line-up, as well as their X-Box (cough, spit) titles. Here are his encouraging and insightful responses:

With games like Microsoft's own *Crimson Skies* on the horizon, Fries has faith in the future of the PC.

PCG: What do you think about the current state of the PC games market?
Ed Fries: It's a great time to be in PC games. The installed base continues to grow, and innovative new types of games (for example, *The Sims*) are reaching out to a broader audience and creating a bigger market for everyone. I felt very positive about what I saw at E3 this year on the PC side. Our own *MechWarrior 4*, *Crimson Skies*, *FreeLancer*, and *Dungeon Siege* show what PC gaming can be. Other great PC games on display included *Black & White* by Lionhead, *Halo* by Bungie, and *Republic* by Elixir, just to name a few of my favorites.

PCG: What do you think about the future of PC gaming specifically?
Ed: The great thing about PC gaming is that it's always at the cutting edge. We're at that funny time that occurs every five years or so, around the release of a new generation of consoles, where for a brief moment consoles catch up to PCs in terms of graphic capability, and everyone starts to talk about whether PC gaming is dead. All the same articles were written five years ago when PlayStation and N64 were launched. Here we are five years later and the PC games market is bigger and better than ever.

PCG: Peter Molyneux is planning to leave the PC scene after he's done with *Black & White*. What do you think of this move?
Ed: Peter likes to be at the cutting edge, and right now the new generation of consoles are very powerful. I wouldn't be surprised to see Peter returning to PC development in a few years when PC graphics have moved well beyond today's new consoles.

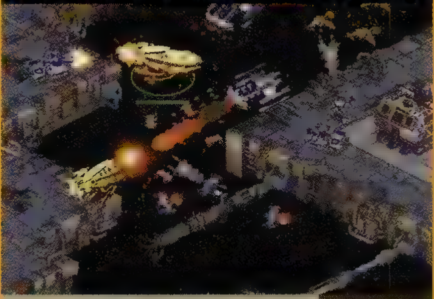
Ed Fries, VP of Microsoft's gaming division.

PCG: Do you think that the PC will be able to keep up with all the current advances made by other gaming platforms?
Ed: PCs are designed to upgrade and expand, so it's very easy for PCs to stay current. It's consoles that have a problem in this regard. For the economics to work on a game console, it needs to stay with essentially the same technology for five years. This means it's very strong at first but very dated by the end of its life. PCs don't share this problem.

PCG: If you had to give gamers one good reason to stay with the PC as a gaming platform, what would it be?
Ed: PC gamers are the hardest core gamers. They want to take advantage of the latest technology. They want a high-resolution display. They want a choice of rich input devices. They want a fast connection to the Internet. They want a big hard disk with lots of room for upgrades. I guess I'd have to say the one reason to stick with the PC is it will always have the richest, deepest games.

NOW AND THEN

The Top-Selling Games Today...



Rank	Game and Publisher	PCG Rating
1	Who Wants To Be A Millionaire 2nd Ed. Disney	N/A
2	The Sims Electronic Arts	96%
3	RollerCoaster Tycoon Hasbro Interactive	89%
4	Age of Empires II: Age Of Kings Microsoft	94%
5	Who Wants To Be A Millionaire Disney	78%
6	EverQuest: Ruins Of Kunark Verant	N/A
7	StarCraft Havas Interactive	92%
8	RollerCoaster Tycoon Corkscrew Follies Hasbro Interactive	N/A
9	Sim City 3000 Unlimited Electronic Arts	N/A
10	Sim Mania Pack Electronic Arts	N/A

...And This Time Five Years Ago

Rank	Game and Publisher	PCG Rating
1	Myst Mattel Interactive	95%
2	Dark Forces LucasArts	92%
3	Doom II GT Interactive	90%
4	Full Throttle LucasArts	90%
5	Heretic Shareware GT Interactive	N/A
6	Descent Interplay	96%
7	Sim Tower Electronic Arts	74%
8	Doom Shareware Id Software	N/A
9	NASCAR I Havas Interactive	94%
10	D!Zone Collector's Edition GT Interactive	N/A

THE PCG NEWS TICKER

id Software is working on a new Doom game. So far, nothing is known about the game other than the fact that **John Carmack** is working on it, and it will be single-player focused. However, it's probably a safe bet to expect a brand new engine. We'll keep you posted.

Sony has fully acquired **Verant Interactive**, the company behind *EverQuest*. The San Diego-based developer will now be merged with **Sony Online Entertainment**. **John Smedley**, president of **Verant**, was named executive vice president of Sony Online Entertainment.

Peter Molyneux, the game god behind *Populous*, *Magic Carpet*, and *Dungeon Keeper*, has announced that *Black & White* will be his last game developed specifically for the PC. His company, **Lionhead Studios**, will now be focusing on next generation consoles.

Starship Troopers has finally come out of development limbo. Originally a first-person shooter, the game has been snatched up by **Hasbro Interactive** and turned into a real-time squad-based strategy game. Gamers will be able to lead squads of Mobile Infantry against 15 different types of Arachnids.

All this scene is missing is an orgasmatron.

Larger Than Life

The official *Sims* expansion pack

Maxis has just unveiled *The Sims: Livin' Large*. This official expansion pack to one of the year's best-sellers, *The Sims,* will add more gaming goodness to what is already one of the best games of the year. The pack will introduce five new career tracks: Musician, Slacker, Journalism, Paranormal, and Hacker, for a total of fifty new jobs ranging from UFO Investigator to Games Journalist. There will also be three new decor styles: Castle, Retro, and Vegas.

Gamers will be treated to a slew of new situations, one of which is UFO abduction. When this happens, a shadow appears over your house, and one of your sims is beamed aboard. A few days later, the aliens will drop the sim back into the house, only now that sim's personality will be changed. Also, sims will now be able to invite each other into bed for a little fooling around, and no, there's nothing explicit. You'll just see them get naked (the mosaic is still there), hop under the covers, and, well...you can figure the rest out yourself (right?). Finally, there are new objects ranging from the bizarre, such as a genie bottle (which can be rubbed for a wish), to the tacky, such as a heart-shaped vibrating bed. So when is this wonderful pack of *Sim*-liciousness coming? Fall 2000, of course.

Maybe the reason your sim can't get babes is because he doesn't have a vibrating bed.

PC GAMER RECOMMENDS

These are worth your time and cash!

SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

Good clean fun, but keep the kiddies away!

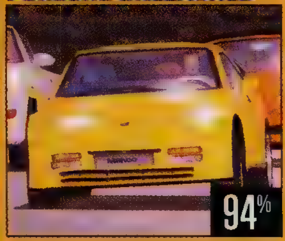
MOBIL 1 RALLY

Rally fans won't want to pass up on this one.

UNREAL TOURNAMENT

One of the best multiplayer games ever.

NEED FOR SPEED: PORSCHE UNLEASHED



The best racing game currently out for the PC.

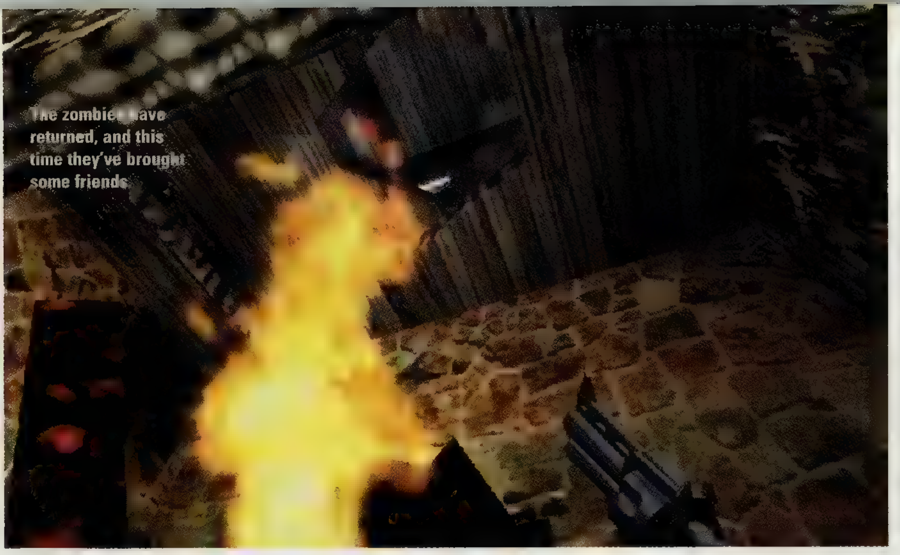
THE PCG NEWS TICKER

Eidos has chosen a new model to play Lara Croft. Lucy Clarkson, 16, hails from Rotherham, England (five miles from Rob's hometown). She turned quite a few heads during her debut at this year's E3, which we found mildly disturbing since she's a minor.

A third *Delta Force* game is on the way from NovaLogic. Called *Land Warrior*, the game will have full 3D acceleration and support for 3dfx cards. A new engine gives players the ability to explore wide-open areas as well as the interior of massive structures for some CQB.

Gathering of Developers has scooped up the rights to *Shadowbane*, a massively multiplayer roleplaying game from Wolfpack Studios. Players will be able to form guilds and even start guild wars. Expect to see it in summer 2001.

Sears and Montgomery Wards have both decided to cease selling any games with an "M" rating. All titles that receive this rating will no longer be available from either store. Currently, a group of senators are urging major retail chains to stop selling violent games to children.


The zombies have returned, and this time they've brought some friends.

More Zombies!

Neil Manke is at it again, with more gaming goodness for you

One of the coolest *Half-Life* add-ons ever is about to get the sequel treatment. Neil Manke's *They Hunger 2: Rest in Pieces* will soon be available exclusively to *PC Gamer* readers. In case you missed the original (it was recently made available on *The CD* in our May 2000 issue), *They Hunger* is a total conversion modification for *Half-Life* that adds all new weapons, enemies, levels, and more.

In the first game, you were pitted against a horde of flesh-eating zombies that had taken over a small town in the country. It ended with you being captured by the zombies. In the sequel, you are rescued from your prison by a fellow survivor and continue your quest to find out what or who is behind the zombie horde. Expect to see even more new bad guys, levels, weapons, and a whole batch of plot twists to keep you glued to your keyboard.

Remember, this is an add-on so you'll need to have the full version of *Half-Life* to play it. *They Hunger 2: Rest in Pieces* should be available on *The PCG CD* within a couple months.

The Next Fallout

No, it's *not* an RPG — but it still looks like fun

Interplay is hard at work on the latest *Fallout* game, and it's not a roleplaying game. At least, not in the way the previous two critically acclaimed *Fallout* titles were. Dubbed *Fallout Tactics*, this third game, set in the post-apocalyptic Fallout universe, will focus mainly on squad-based tactical combat played through a continuous Turn-Based Action System. Of course, it will still have RPG elements such as character development.

Fallout Tactics puts you in the armored boots of a squad leader in the Brotherhood of Steel, a group of warriors who believe that technology is the key to restoring the world to its former glory. You'll choose from 30 recruits (each with their own special skills), have access to new weapons, and even be able to commandeer vehicles. There's still no word on a release date, but we'll let you know as soon as we find out.

Fallout Tactics will also feature extensive multiplayer options over both LAN and the Internet.

WAITING IS THE HARDEST PART

Well, now that *Diablo II* is finally here, competition for the number one spot is fierce. So what is taking over as the most highly anticipated game? A game that doesn't even exist! Cries for *Starsiege 2* have come flooding in. Could a one-year-old Mech game cause such a stir?

This month's winner is Walter Drisdell, who just can't wait for *Baldur's Gate 2*. Walter, your prize is on the way, so sit out by the mailbox...just kidding. To become our next lucky winner you need to tell us what *your* most anticipated game is. Just send an E-mail to *eyewitness@pcgamer.com* with "Waiting is the Hardest Part" in the subject heading. Like always, we'll pick one lucky winner to win a game from our shelf of gaming goodness. All entries must be received by the 30th of each month. Winners will be notified by E-mail. See additional rules on page 46.

1. Starsiege 2 .... 14%
2. WarCraft III 10%
3. Team Fortress 2 .... 9%
4. Baldur's Gate II 7%
5. Tribes 2 .... 6%
6. Duke Nukem Forever 5%
7. Halo 4%
8. Shadowbane 3%
9. Vampire: The Masquerade Redemption 3%
10. Black & White 2%

COMINGS & GOINGS

Looks like things are being shaken up a bit in the ol' games industry. Here's what's been happening this month:

id — **John Cash** has left **id Software** to go work for **Blizzard Entertainment**. Cash had been with **id** sine 1995 and has worked on projects ranging from *Quake* to *Quake III: Arena*. He is now the technical lead on Blizzard's yet-to-be-announced-but-we're-guessing-a-massively-multiplayer-online-RPG secret project. In other **id** news, internal disagreements over the new Doom project led to the firing of modeler **Paul Steed**.

Firaxis — **Michael Breitkreutz** tops the list of hires recently made by **Firaxis**. **Breitkreutz** was the lead programmer at **DreamForge Intertainment** and has worked on such titles as *Ravenloft: Stone Prophet* and *Chronomaster*. **Firaxis** also hired **Soren Johnson**, a programmer whose previous job was with **Electronic Arts**.

3D Realms — **3D Realms** has recently hired **Brandon Reinhart**, a programmer from **Epic** Games. He's best known for his work on *Unreal Tournament*. Reinhart will now be one of the programmers for *Duke Nukem Forever*.

The guinea pig download for *The Sims* has led to some very upset gamers. Unhappy guinea pigs will bite their owners, causing an infection, which can then spread to other sims, and if left untreated (by sleep), can lead to death. Worse yet, sometimes the bite will kill instantly.

You Don't Know Jack 5th Dementia will soon be available on your PC. This latest incarnation of the popular quiz game series will be playable online. Gamers will get the chance to compete with each other over the Internet in a match of wits. The ship date is this September.

Infogrames has decided to launch a series of websites that take advantage of Immersion TouchSense technology, giving visitors the ability to "feel" the sites. Owners must have hardware that supports the technology, like the Logitech Force Feedback mouse, to experience the new effects.

The *Homeworld* demo should be out by the time you read this. It will include a whole new mission not available in the full game called *Turanic Raider Planetoid*. The demo itself will have a training session and the first four levels from the original game.

OPPONENTS
ARE EVERYWHERE
ELECTRONIC ENTERTAINMENT EXPO

The mecca of the games industry.

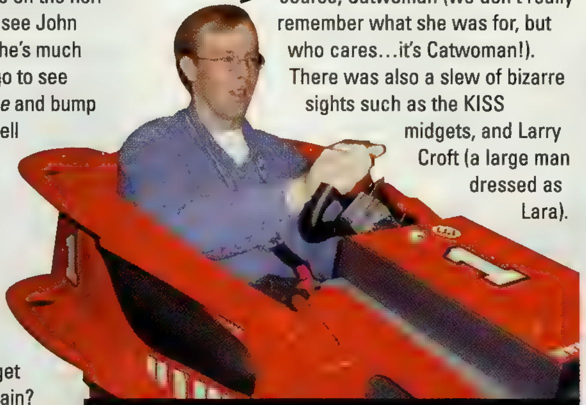
The Sights and Sounds of E3

You wouldn't believe some of things we saw...

Ah, E3...the Electronic Entertainment Expo — the one place where everyone who's anyone in the world of gaming congregates under one roof. Where else can you go to see all the latest games and hardware on the horizon? Where else can you see John Romero and realize that he's much shorter in person, or go to see *Tachyon: The Fringe* and bump into Bruce Campbell (who's taller in person)? Where else can you see *F.A.K.K. 2*'s Julie Strain wearing close to nothing *(aside from those sites — Ed)*, sitting right next to a midget version of Julie Strain? Of course, you can't forget the booth babes, ranging from Vampire girls for the *Buffy* game, cave girls for Fox's *Planet of the Apes*, and of course, Catwoman (we don't really remember what she was for, but who cares...it's Catwoman!). There was also a slew of bizarre sights such as the KISS midgets, and Larry Croft (a large man dressed as Lara).

Duke Nukem could be seen strutting his stuff with his duke babes.

These bloody Yanks are driving on the wrong side of the road!



Even Editors-in-Chief like to pretend they're race car drivers.

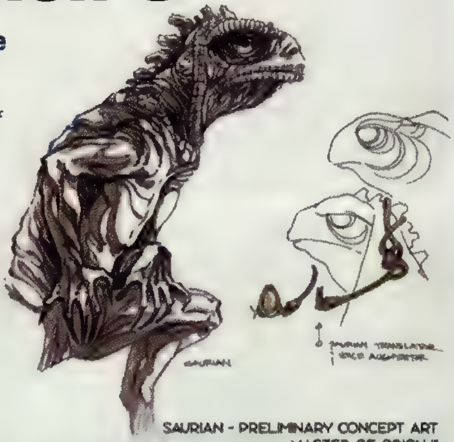
And throughout all of this you're bombarded by noise, announcers of all kinds, games blasting, music blaring, and the constant din of the crowd. All in all, it was a busy, stressful, loud, time for all.

So will we be back next year? You bet!

Master of Orion 3

Become the master of the universe

Master of Orion is considered one of the greatest games of all time, and *Master of Orion 2* received a very respectable 86 percent from us in our March 1997 issue. More importantly, both games sold well. MicroProse hopes to deliver another hit with *Master of Orion 3*. So far, very few details have been released about the game. We do know that this time around combat will be real-time, while the rest of the game is turn-based. Up to eight players will be able to participate in a game with maps that are up to three times the size of those found in *MOO2*. Quicksilver Software, the people behind *Star Trek: Starfleet Comamnd*, is the developer, and Hasbro Interactive will be publishing the title. Plans are for it to be on store shelves sometime during Fall 2001.



Either someone left a biology book lying around, or *MOO3* is going to feature bizarre new races.

PCG CONTESTS

Allegiance

Microsoft takes you to the stars

Fans of space action games will be happy to hear that we are giving away five copies of *StarLancer* and *Allegiance*. Just send in an E-mail to *eyewitness@pcgamer.com* with "Take me to the stars" as the subject heading. Be sure to include your name and address so that we know where to send your prize if you're picked. Only one entry per household and multiple entries will result in instant disqualification and permanent ridicule. Winners will be chosen at random by Coconut Monkey and notified by E-mail. All entries must be received by July 31, 2000. See additional rules below.

The Winners

And the winners of the "Take me out to the Ballgames" contest are:

- Scott Anderson
- Dick Downing
- Lee Sutkowi
- Matthew Williams
- Randy Frantsvog
- Carol Dickens

CONTEST RULES

No purchase is necessary, and only one entry per household, per month, will be counted. Anyone can vote, but only U.S. residents are eligible to win prizes, and the offer is void in FL, RI, Puerto Rico, and where prohibited by law. Your chances of winning depend on the number of entries we receive.

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Gunship! didn't perform the way Hasbro had hoped.

ROB JONES
CARL MOORE
Hasbro remains committed to X-COM: Alliance.

Hasbro's Cautious Direction

Tank Platoon! is no more, but the company reaffirms its commitment to the PC

After the promise of connected gameplay with *Gunship!*, production on *Tank Platoon!* has been cancelled by publisher Hasbro. "What we learned from our recent release of *Gunship!* is that we're challenged to attract the hardcore fans and, at the same time, the more casual gamers," says a Hasbro spokesperson close to the project.

The big attraction of *Tank Platoon!* was that the gameplay could be linked to *Gunship!*, letting players of both games compete and cooperate with one another. "We were going to move forward with these games, but with high development costs, we couldn't make it work on paper," says Laura Tomasetti, VP of Hasbro PR.

But it's certainly not all doom and gloom for PC gamers with Hasbro's portfolio of strong brands ready for PC prime time. "Yes, we're working to bring interactive versions of *Magic: The Gathering* and *D&D* to PC, online, and consoles," Tomasetti confirms. A massively multiplayer official D&D game, using a modular format that mirrors the tabletop experience, is certainly one strong possibility. Interplay's *Neverwinter Nights* may steal some of the thunder of this particular gameplay innovation, making Hasbro's catch-up that much more difficult.

Hasbro will also remain in the strategy game arena, taking advantage of the Avalon Hill brand it acquired last year. The first game under the banner will be *Squad Leader*, with expansion packs matching the board game enhancements to follow should it prove popular at retail.

The company will use *Squad Leader* to test the waters, and it feels that there could be room for more strategy titles on their release schedule. An online version of *Risk*, supporting up to 30 players, is also in the pipeline.

Of course, Hasbro is still committed to titles in development, such as *X-COM: Alliance*. Tomasetti also suggests that the hardcore sim games may reappear should the right products be developed and the market show signs of being able to support these games. So while naysayers may use news of *Tank Platoon!* being canned as further evidence of the PC's ever-weakening position, there are still many strong titles in development. "Two-thirds of our business is PC over console," explains Tomasetti, "so we're heavy duty behind that platform."

Good news? Of course, but let's hope that doesn't mean more crap like *Frogger*!

THE PCG RELEASE METER

See anything you like? Of course you do! There's some great games on the horizon. Unfortunately, delays are common, and release dates change often. Check *www.gonegold.com* for the most up-to-date info. Thanks to Rich LaPorte of Gone Gold for compiling this list. Send news of all releases to *laporte@gonegold.com*

TITLE	PUBLISHER	DATE	PROGNOSIS
Dark Reign 2	Activision	07/01/00	Should be close
Metal Fatigue	Unknown	07/01/00	Publisher problems
Longest Journey	Empire	07/01/00	Should arrive
R6: Covert Ops Essentials	Red Storm	07/02/00	Alpha, go!
Indy Racing League 2000	GT Software	07/08/00	Yes
KISS Psycho Circus	G.O.D.	07/18/00	Big top will be open
Pharoah: Cleopatra	Sierra	07/26/00	Looking good
Starship Troopers	MicroProse	07/26/00	Troops will be ready
Dogs of War	Talonsoft	07/31/00	Have your leash ready
Enemy Engaged	Empire	07/31/00	Must have!
Homeworld: Cataclysm	Sierra	08/04/00	Should be close
Reach for the Stars	Mindscape	08/10/00	Hope so
Arcatera	UbiSoft	08/15/00	Let the adventure begin
Dragon Rider	UbiSoft	08/15/00	Flying in
Sanity: Aiken's Artifact	Fox	08/16/00	Should make it
Time Machine	DreamCatcher	08/16/00	Clocks in on time
Grand Prix 3	MicroProse	08/23/00	Ready to roll
Star Trek: New Worlds	Interplay	08/23/00	Make it so
Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force	Activision	08/31/00	Probable
SWAT 3 Battle Plan	Sierra	08/31/00	Lock 'n load

KISS

Starship Troopers

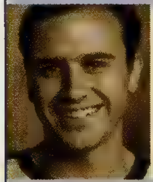
Homeworld

THE PCG PLAYLIST

Everybody say "Hi" to Chiaki, our new assistant art director. She's added a much-needed dose of estrogen to our happy little team, and has already proved to be quite the gamer while playing *BoarderZone*. Now that she's here, Joe can stop pulling all-nighters to get the issue done all by himself, and Coconut Monkey can go back to working on *Gravy Trader*.

ROB Aside from aiding and abetting Greg's epic journey through *Diablo II* (oh yes), I reinstalled *High Heat 2001* and continued to take flak for the Giants' performance. On top of that, even *Daikatana* got a look in, and my Sheffield United still can't get in to the Premiership in *Championship Manager 3*. I think I suck at playing games.

LISA I'm back to my old habit of playing *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* every day now that the second edition is out. But I have to admit — it's not as much fun now that Whitta is gone. He was the "enabler" that helped fuel my addiction. Gaz would start a game, and I couldn't help but be drawn in!

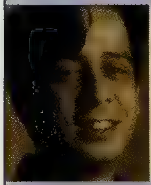


DAN I am very close to achieving the reunification of ancient Japan as Shogun, at least within the confines of my computer-aided fantasy life (which means I'm playing a lot of *Shogun: Total War*). In real life, I am mostly just trying to goad *Next Generation* editor Tom Russo into a fight.

SMOKE I forced myself to take a *High Heat* break (don't worry…I still sneak in a game now and then) to try to expand my horizons. I've really been enjoying breaking clubs over my knee in *PGA Championship 2000*, receiving skull fractures in *Motocross Madness 2*, and reliving the early days with *Lemmings Revolution*.

LI I had a chance to play *Team Fortress Classic 1.5*. I have to say, the new play mode is awesome. It's like a mix of CTF, Rugby, and The Hunted all in one. Hopefully, this will help me deal with *Team Fortress 2* being continually delayed. I've also been playing the hell out of *NFS: Porsche Unleased*.

JEREMY It ain't a PC game…it's called Texas Hold 'Em. During some downtime at E3, my colleagues Dan and Rob introduced me to this delicious variation of Poker, and I proceeded to take my fellow editors for all they cared to raise. I'm hooked, but recently my poker face has fallen due to minor losses. Time to hit the ATM.



JOE I came close to death on Highway 101, then spent a week laid up with a back sprain. Meanwhile, I've been teaching Li a lesson in *Urban Ops* and trying out *Star Trek Armada*. I'm still hunting for the dumb-ass that ran me off the road. Anyone see a cream-colored Ford Explorer on the 101 at 8:50 p.m. on May 15th?

CHIAKI What a tease *Boarder Zone* is! Don't get me wrong — the game is fantastic — but it really makes me want to skip town and run for Tahoe. I've really enjoyed *NFS: Porsche Unleashed*, too. Driving a cherry Porsche as fast as you can through hairpin turns, knuckles white, teeth clenched, heart pumping...it's good to be a gamer.

GREG Due to *Diablo II* withdrawal, Greg was unable to send in his comments this month. It's really pathetic to see a grown man (physically…not mentally) openly weep when he finds out he has to wait a couple of weeks before getting another copy of the game to play outside of Blizzard's office.

I want this bad-ass chick on my team, if you know what I mean.

Quake III: Team Arena

Go Team Quake!

Two issues ago we broke the news on a new *Quake III* add-on. We had little more to go on other than a few screenshots and rumors about it being a team-oriented game. Now we know more. Titled *Quake III: Team Arena*, this new add-on will focus on strategic cooperative competition, much like the legendary *Team Fortress Classic*.

There will be plenty of modes to keep players busy for a very long time. One involves collecting an artifact that appears in the center of the map every time a player is killed; this artifact must be picked up and taken to the opposing team's base. Another mode is monument defense where a monument in each base must be destroyed. The monuments regenerate hit points, so aggressive teams will fare better than more timid teams.

Of course, what's an add-on without new weapons? *Team Arena* will feature the return of some *Quake* classics such as the nail gun and the chain gun. A new addition is the proximity mine launcher, which should be handy for fortifying base defenses. Team power-ups will also be available. These range from increased firepower to increased speed and last as long as a player is alive. There will also be plenty of new skins, and models (including characters that wink), with new heads that are interchangeable.

Topping it all off is a handy new graphical interface that replaces the clunky one that originally shipped with *Quake III: Arena*. Unfortunately, we still haven't received word on exactly when the game will ship, but don't be surprised if it's on store shelves in time for Christmas.

NEXT MONTH

"Martini. Shaken, not stirred."

James Bond is still one of the world's biggest action heroes. Take the action of *The World Is Not Enough* and meld it with the *Quake III Arena* engine, and you should be on to a winner, right? We damn well hope so, and next month's exclusive insider scoop will give you the low down on what to expect.

Quake changed lives. The community that built around that game created tax-paying citizens from game geeks as fan sites became full-time jobs. Gamers are quitting work to become item traders in *EverQuest*, and mod-makers are making bank. Who? How? We give you the full dope of how a bunch of gaming enthusiasts are making a living working with the games they love.

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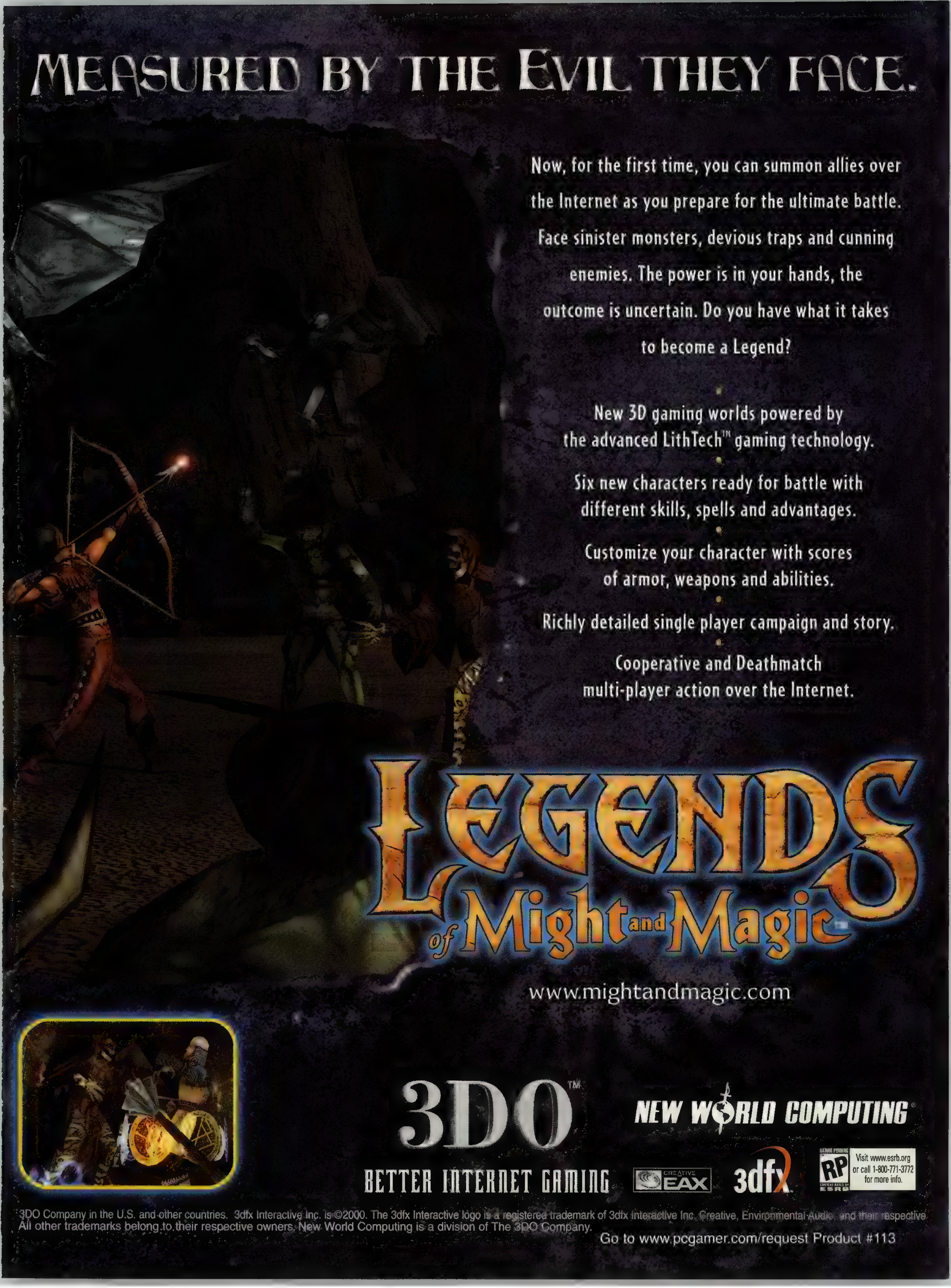
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The fat lady is on stage . . .

. . . clearing her throat. This is month six of our fantastic contest. That means that for general entries, it's all over. The six winners will now be resubmitted to our panel of distinguished guest judges for the selection of one game, and one designer to walk off with the top prize. And since you seem to like this game design idea, we're going to keep it going as a regular feature. We'll print one or two entries a month, so make them good — and send them to the same E-mail address (*design@pcgamer.com*). We may even have a monthly prize for the winner.

THIS MONTH'S **CELEBRITY** JUDGE

Will Wright

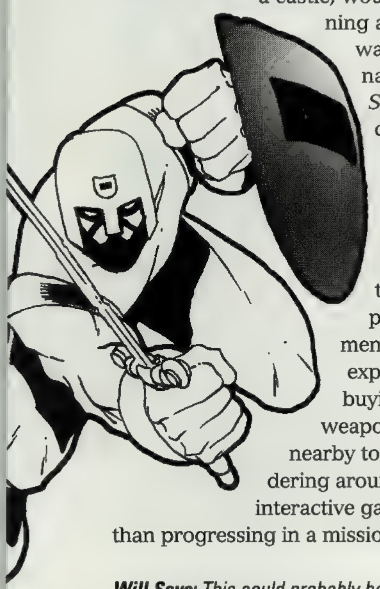
Will Wright is the legendary creator of the SimCity franchise, and most recently *The Sims* — games that have sold millions of copies worldwide.

Crusade

Chris Burch

Crusade is a strategy/RPG game that combines elements from games such as *Ultima IX: Ascension* and *Battlezone*. In it, you play a knight chosen to lead a medieval army against a race of Viking-like warriors.

The style of play would be a *Battlezone*-like interface where you can give orders to units while controlling the character you play at the same time, from a third-person perspective. Some missions, like a siege on a castle, would require planning ahead by setting waypoints and signals, a la *Rainbow Six*'s waypoint/go code system.



RPG elements would add depth. Storytelling would focus on the knight you play. Other elements would include experience for units, buying armor, and weapon upgrades at nearby towns, and wandering around in a fully interactive game world rather than progressing in a mission-based manner.

Will Says: *This could probably be made into a good game. My biggest problem with this is that there are already so many games out there that have this sort of theme. Somehow I keep envisioning Age of Empires as I read the description.*

Turd Burglar

Michael Barber

Along the lines of *Gravy Trader*, but something all together different, I present to you... *Turd Burglar* an epic sim adventure of a female Dung Beetle. Let's call her Mrs. Dung Beetle.

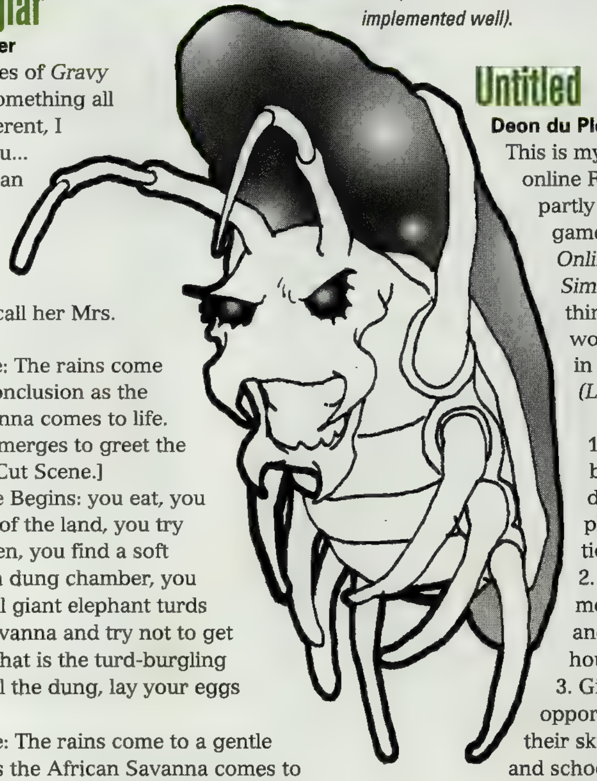
Cut Scene: The rains come to a gentle conclusion as the African Savanna comes to life. Our heroin emerges to greet the world. [End Cut Scene.]

The Game Begins: you eat, you learn the lay of the land, you try not to be eaten, you find a soft place to dig a dung chamber, you mate, you roll giant elephant turds across the savanna and try not to get stepped on (that is the turd-burgling part), you roll the dung, lay your eggs and die.

Cut Scene: The rains come to a gentle conclusion as the African Savanna comes to life. Our heroin emerges to greet the world. [End Cut Scene.]

This goes on and on until you give your computer the three finger salute, but by then it's too late. Like the tragic hero in the *Metamorphosis*, you find you really have become the Dung Beetle (that part will be tricky). You scream with madness and curse the day you bought this digital coaster.

Will Says: *This is a funny concept. I tend to prefer social insects, myself. There was a game a few years ago called Bad Mojo that had the sort of Kafkaesque feel that I think you're aiming for in this product. I think a major factor in this design is whether it goes in a gritty, adult, artsy direction or in a cutesy, funny, kid-like title. With either approach, I would imagine this would become a rather niche product (in terms of sales) but with a few die-hard fans (assuming it's implemented well).*



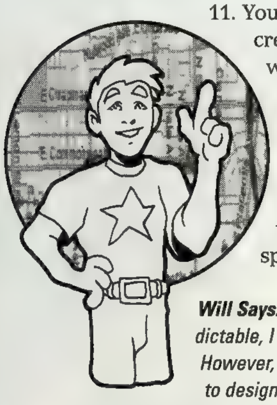
Untitled

Deon du Plessis

This is my idea for an online RPG, inspired partly by the success of games like *Ultima Online*, *The Sims*, and *SimCity 3000*. Do you think Will Wright would be interested in working on it? *(Let's ask him –Ed)*

1. The idea is to build a modern-day city through player participation.
2. Provide the means to construct and decorate houses.
3. Give the player the opportunity to improve their skills through gyms and schools.
4. Create a basic city for players to start in, complete with stores, banks, and non-player governors.
5. Have the designers run the city (i.e. as city councilors).
6. Allow players to construct roads, bridges, and buildings as they see fit (encouraging teamwork), but supervised by the city council. This means giving them the skills to practice so they can do this.

7. Provide in-game security, but do not make it invincible, giving players the chance to become crime lords if they so wish.
8. Create jobs for players to fill, like cops, merchants, and service providers.
9. Allow players to engage in recreational activities (maybe even create an in-game cinema or television station with webTV piped in for amusement).
10. Deliberately create a banking system that is good but not infallible so that the intelligent players can plan and execute bank robberies.
11. You could possibly even create a parliament where all concerns are heard and suggestions can be made.
12. This should all be done from a third-person 3D perspective.



Will Says: *At the risk of being predictable, I really like this idea. However, this is not a simple thing to design or engineer. I would imagine (not that I've thought about this at all) that one of the real challenges to this idea is keeping the player interface to the world simple (how do I bank? How do I build, or vote or steal?) while enabling as much interaction with the world as you describe.*

Inoculant

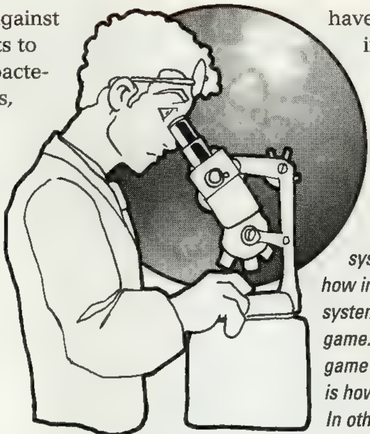
Ryan Kinkor

An experimental neurological interface has been created by medical science. Now, a doctor can access and control a patient's immune system, with the idea that a human mind directly controlling the human body's defenses might succeed where the brain's autonomic systems fail.

In a real-time strategy theme, you play a doctor using the interface to combat a multitude of diseases and health problems through the body's natural defenses. You control killer white cells and antigens, chemicals, and body reactions such as fever and mucus quantity. You can increase the body's production of cells beyond normal rates, but risk weakening the patient in the process, so production must be balanced with care to the body.

You can send armies of white cells to attack a multitude of microscopic invaders, either letting battles run themselves or directly controlling cell movements through a 3D interface. You can "research" an invader with special cells to create antibodies against it. You must take care to protect vital organs of the body, possibly sacrificing other tissues and organs to save the patient.

You will face off against many different threats to the patient, such as bacteria, parasites, poisons, and foreign objects. Viruses will be the most common threat, from the common cold virus to the powerful HIV virus that attacks your own defense cells. You must even combat the body's own immune system if it malfunctions or your body's own cells if they become cancerous. Different patients will have different problems, which increases difficulty and variety in "levels." And you'll be judged as a doctor on how well you save the patient.



Will Says: *Several years ago I met a researcher who was developing a computer model of the auto-immune system. We had a long discussion about how interesting and intricate this was as a system and how it might be turned into a cool game. Based on that, I'm convinced that this game could be quite cool. The challenge here is how do you convince other people of this. In other words, there are many designs that would make great games but they don't necessarily sound like great games from a casual description (SimCity was very much like that).*

ILLUSTRATIONS BY DAN FRAGA

THIS MONTH'S **WINNER** IS...

Ho Chi Minh Trail

Chris Hope

[illegible] in 1967. Your mission is kind of like *Apocalypse Now* in reverse. You must make your way from North Vietnam to Saigon along the Ho Chi Minh Trail and confront a highly placed Viet Cong operative who [illegible] American advisors.

I see this as a *Half-Life*-type first-person shooter, but with stealth, as in *Thief*, at a premium. Most of the action occurs during the trip down the trail, although the climactic end-game sequence occurs in urban Saigon. Among the obstacles and mini-mis[illegible] capturing a downed American pilot, setting an ambush for a *Platoon*-style patrol, fighting off tigers and elephants, helping villagers defend against a renegade band of Viet Cong bad-asses, sneaking into an American base and sabotaging helicopters and arms depots, shooting down a helicopter or two, navigating a tunnel network, etc. You would have to travel narrow paths, [illegible] and, in the final sequence, the streets and [illegible] would include the obvious AK-47, machetes, [illegible]

Will Says:

This idea sounds really cool. I'm not sure that I'm the best person to critique this since I've never done a first-person shooter, but this does sound like something I would consider buying. My favorite part of this idea is the role reversal that puts you in the shoes of a Viet Cong. There have been so many films and such showing the Vietnam war from the U.S. perspective that I would find the view from the other side to possibly be quite illuminating.

I think I'll have to pick this as the winner just because I have a gut feel that it could be more marketable than Inoculant and would be a much [illegible]

HOW TO ENTER

[illegible] a general overview of the concept and central design. The judges will be looking for originality, the potential for a playable [illegible]

[illegible] DESIGN CONTEST [illegible]

HOW TO WIN THAT JOB AT ION STORM

[illegible]

[illegible] ing! Next month is your last chance!

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[illegible]

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FULL-SCALE INVASION THIS FALL

98

REASONS WHY you and your PC are going to be enjoying games together for many a year to come

My fellow PC Gamers...

There is an old Chinese saying that goes: "May you live in interesting times." It's intended as a curse.

These are certainly interesting times for PC gaming. With the world's mass media spotlight shining on the new console launches, PC aficionados may be feeling a little left out in the cold. With a number of major publishers apparently on the ropes, and more and more developers being lured by the delinquent charms of console-game profits, a number of eulogies for the PC came out of this year's Electronic Entertainment Expo.

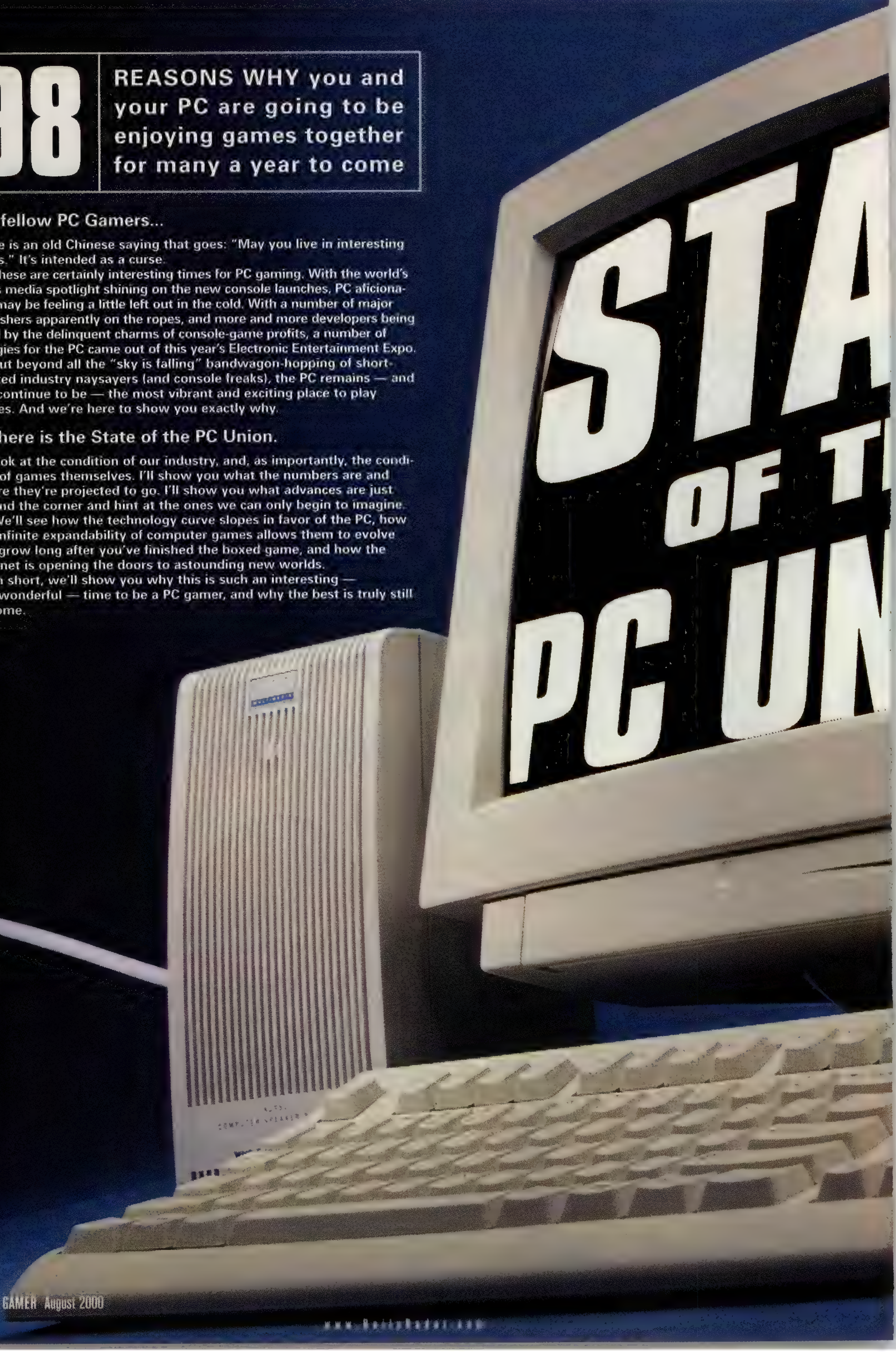
But beyond all the "sky is falling" bandwagon-hopping of short-sighted industry naysayers (and console freaks), the PC remains — and will continue to be — the most vibrant and exciting place to play games. And we're here to show you exactly why.

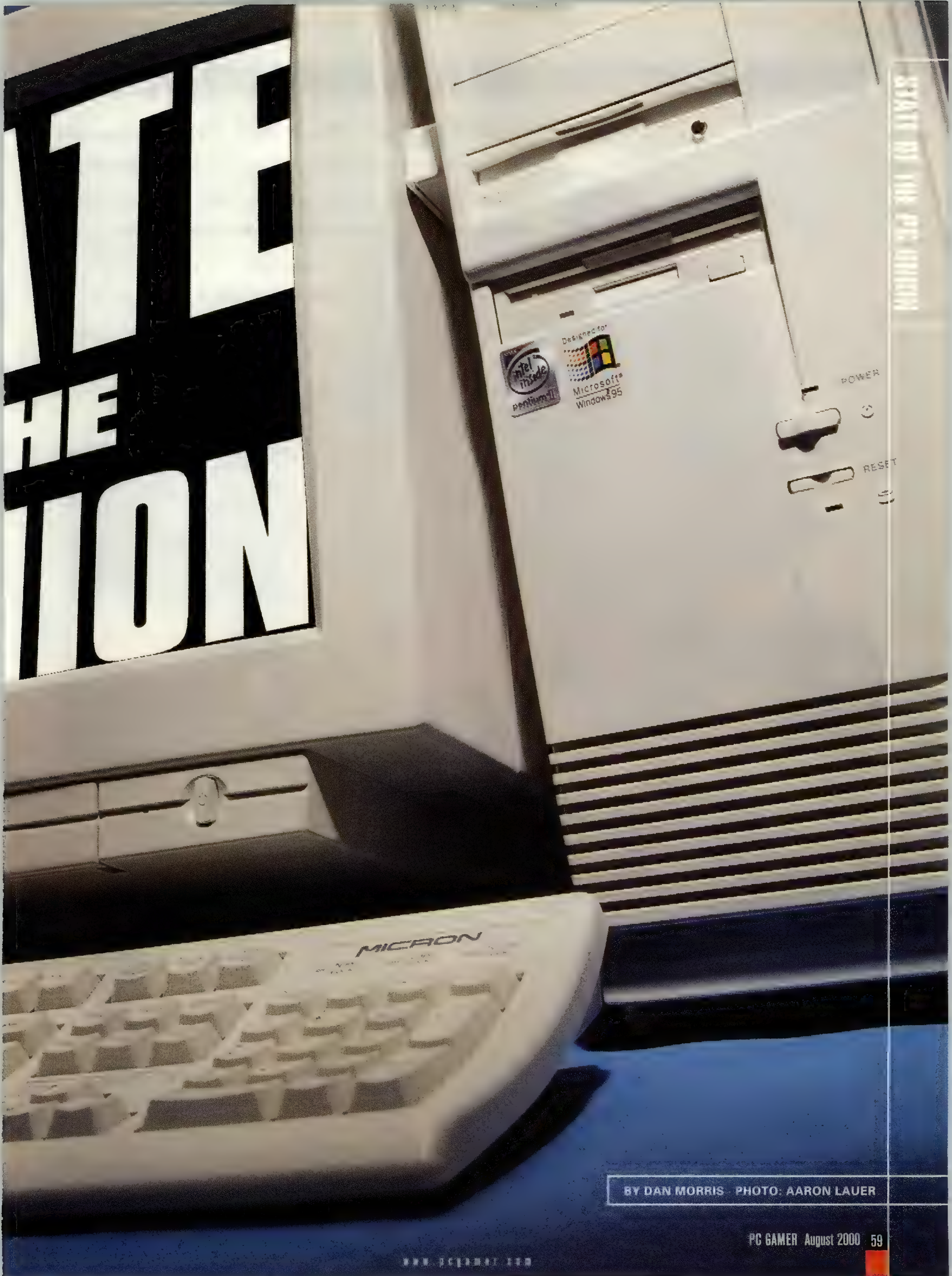
So here is the State of the PC Union.

I'll look at the condition of our industry, and, as importantly, the condition of games themselves. I'll show you what the numbers are and where they're projected to go. I'll show you what advances are just around the corner and hint at the ones we can only begin to imagine.

We'll see how the technology curve slopes in favor of the PC, how the infinite expandability of computer games allows them to evolve and grow long after you've finished the boxed game, and how the Internet is opening the doors to astounding new worlds.

In short, we'll show you why this is such an interesting — and wonderful — time to be a PC gamer, and why the best is truly still to come.

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BY DAN MORRIS PHOTO: AARON LAUER

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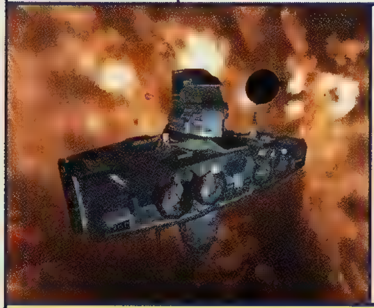
THE OTHER DAY A GUY SAYS TO ME: "THE PC IS DEAD, MAN."

That got me thinking.

A lot has changed since I first marveled at a junior high buddy's PC as he unveiled the mind-boggling world of *Wizardry*. The first-person shooter has risen, the RTS took over strategy, and, as I speak, there are tens of thousands of paying customers living out alternate lives in a 3D realm called Norrath.

FREELANCER



Tomorrow's PC game worlds, as perhaps best exemplified by ambitious massively multi-player games like *Freelancer*, hold the promise of the platform's future.

Some things haven't changed. Dwarves are still almost always friendly and dragons almost never are. You don't mess with a tank platoon when all you've got is some infantry. And you can never, ever expect good things to come from a Nazi.

A lot's changed on the console side, I know that. The graphics have caught up with most PC games, and then there's that almighty Internet connection.

As always, the consoles are idiot-proof and completely standardized, unlike their more troublesome PC cousins. The word around the campfire is that consoles, long the more profitable gaming platform, may have taken over the stage.

So what's the state of the union? What kind of world is it for PC gamers? We're doing fine. Better than ever, actually. And with the best yet to come.

Don't believe me?

I wouldn't blame you.

Times is hard on the boulevard for a lot of folks involved in the PC gaming industry. More and more developers are turning to the consoles and the promise of huge markets and standardized development.

Vis-a-vis, **Looking Glass**, a beloved PC developer, just kicked the bucket, and many others are in perilous condition. Publishers churn out press releases singing the praises of the profits to come from console publishing, while cutting back on PC development.

Hang tough and hang proud. The only thing we have to fear is a year or two of consoles hogging the limelight with splashy launches.

In the meantime, the best computer games in history are coming down the pipeline. As are technological leaps that will forever change the way the world plays games. The PC ain't going nowhere.

A guy named **Ed Fries** told me something one time, and it's worth relaying to you. Fries is Microsoft's point man on gaming — PC or console. He's what you would call a guru, and a very highly paid one. And what he says is this (I paraphrase, but it's pretty much verbatim): Any console platform is just a snapshot of where PC technology is at any given moment. It then holds at a plateau for three to four years, until the next console shakeout. In that time, the PC continues its constant, Moore's Law-driven evolution, quickly (if not immediately) eclipsing a console's capabilities.

The curve slopes to the PC.

It can't help it.

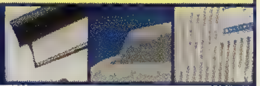
PCs change, consoles don't. Anything they can do, we can do better six months from now. And the things we can do in two years, they can't even conceive.

Okay, that's a reassuring and completely vague generalization. What else ya got?

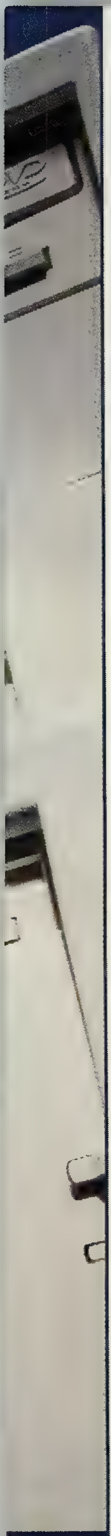
Here are some of the very specific and but not-often-discussed strengths of the PC as a gaming platform, which bear spelling out in these shaky times.

A PC game is infinitely expandable. It never stops being added to by developers and users alike. It can be improved constantly.

18 INFINITE EXPANDABILITY



There is no end to most of today's PC games. One of the platform's key advantages is the ability of games to be modified after the release of the boxed product... adapted and added to by users and developers alike. (*Team Fortress Classic* for *Half-Life* may be the best current example). The ability of PC games to be expanded infinitely may be their biggest strength.



New ideas can be implemented immediately. The game you purchase out of the box is just the starting point of a title's evolution.

And more importantly, people have figured out how to use this miraculous attribute of the PC. User mods, user-created levels, online expansions, skins, bots — the proliferation of editing tools has turned each new major PC release into a digital playground for creative minds.

Even if you're not one of those creative minds, you can still share the fruits of these geniuses' labor by enjoying their creations with a simple and free Internet download.

I thought *Half-Life* was the best game I'd ever played. When I finished it, I set the box on my shelf and thought: This is one I'll wax nostalgic about.

Then came *Team Fortress Classic*. After this free download, and my subsequent introduction to the addictive beauty of games like **The Hunted**, I basically forgot all about the *Half-Life* single-player game. That box I opened up was only the beginning. We can't begin to anticipate the joys that will come after we've experienced the "boxed" game.

Then there is the small matter of control.

As in: keyboard, mouse, joystick, gamepad, steering wheel, pedals, cue stick, and any other of the myriad of input devices available for the PC. Did I mention the mouse and keyboard?

I love consoles. I really do. But they only provide a narrow window of gaming, and it is a window exactly as tall and wide as a gamepad's limited ability to provide me with an interface.

I guess there's maracas, now, too.

But console game design is essentially gamepad game design. The mouse and keyboard unleash a veritable I-Ching of design possibility.

This dynamic is rarely given enough thought or credit. Because a handful of interfaces have established themselves as dependable game-design linchpins, there hasn't been a lot of experimentation with new interfaces. The result is that we've come to take the possibilities for granted.

But new games are refining the traditional interface, often simplifying them even as they become deeper and more useful.

The result is expansion in the possibilities for all kinds of game design. It's like experimenting with a language that consists of a near-infinity of letters, while console developers wrestle with the same ten or twelve.

Plus, the PC is an open platform.

You'll never really upgrade your console, except maybe to chip it or add a memory card.

You can open your PC any time you like and rejuvenate its innards.

You can add technology to keep pace with the newest games.

Yeah, this takes a bit of work and it takes more money. But you're free to upgrade as you see fit, or not upgrade at all.

Basically, you're in control.

You can store as much stuff as you want on your PC's hard drives. With the space capacities of today's PCs, there's no functional limit to the amount of gaming goodness you can cram into your case: games, saves, downloads, or just MP3s to play as you rip through the latest shooter.

And what about this whole Internet thing?

Well, what about it?

THE NEW ONLINE BALLGAME

It's the whole enchilada.

The whole ballgame.

The head, the tail, the whole damn thing.

Deathmatching was just the beginning.

Where it goes from here is basically anyone's guess.

From the cooperative *EverQuest* party system to the infinitely aggressive, massively multiplayer battlegrounds of games like *10SIX* (and its millions of potential opponents), the world of online PC gaming is a frontier where the boundaries are just begging to be pushed.

And it's a frontier on which billions of dollars will be made.

I'm not talking about console dollars, either.

These won't be head-to-head racing games or even multiplayer RTS showdowns.

These will be incredibly involved, endlessly deep, expanding massively multiplayer universes.

These will be the worlds of *Star Wars* and *FreeLancer* and *Ultima Online 2* and other places the consoles simply can't get to.

The new technologies will drive these worlds. So will the downloaded expansions.

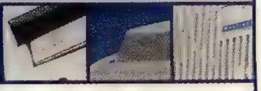
The developer mods. The user mods. All of it, building and escalating game worlds.

Are you starting to get the gist of this virtuous circle?

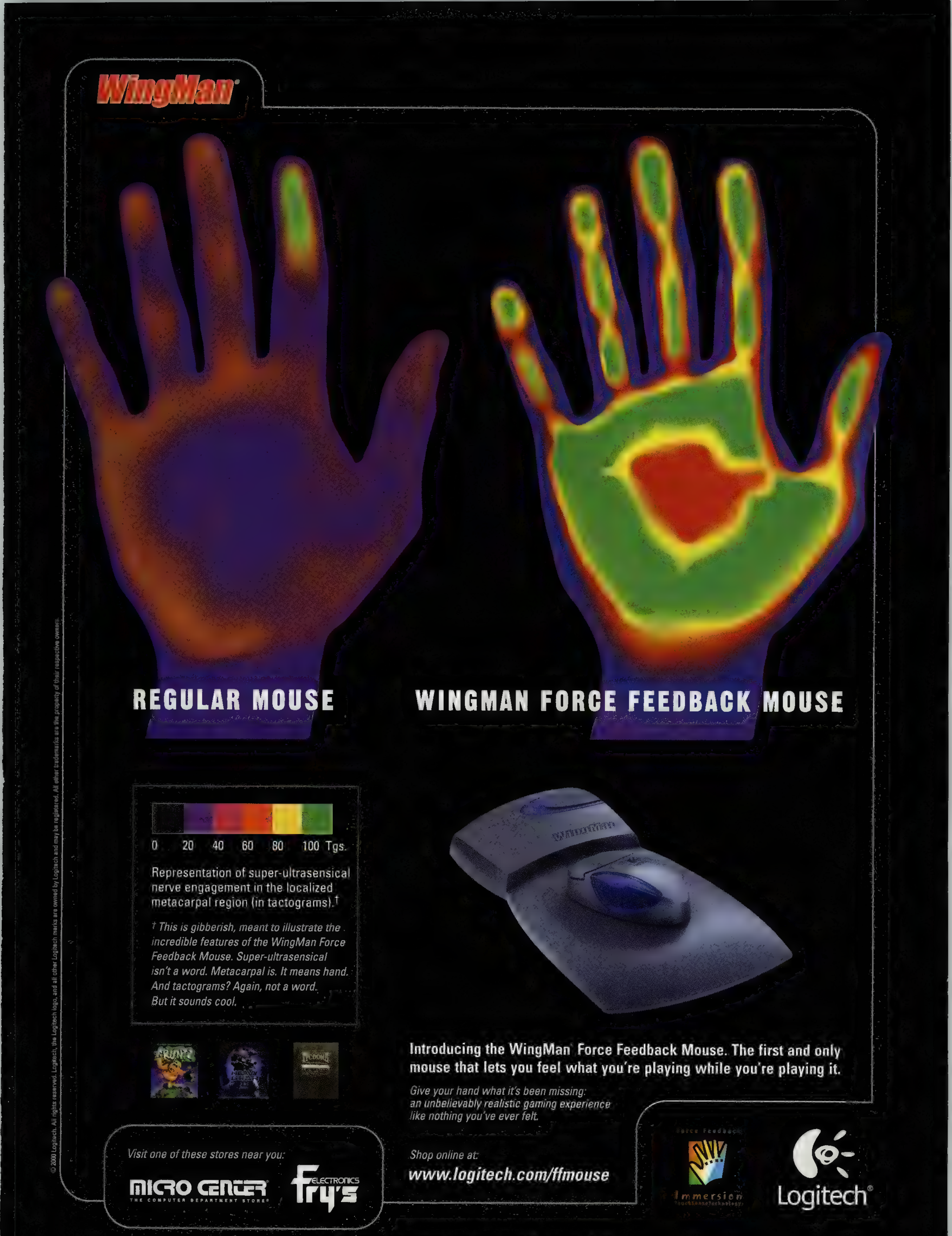
Let's call it the Goodness Loop.

That's what I love most about the PC.

33 OPEN PLATFORM



The PC you bring home from the store (or get delivered by Gateway) is just Step One in the evolution of your gaming rig. Those screws can be unscrewed and the guts rearranged — a huge advantage to life for a PC gamer. As graphics acceleration technology continues its merry leap-frogging, you can keep up with the latest visual advances while the consoles stagnate.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NICKELS AND DIMES ADDING UP TO BILLIONS

Okay. But how will companies stay in business long enough to do any of this?

The PC side of the gaming software industry racked up a cool $2.3 billion in revenues last year, a significant growth over the year before. The revenue growth is expected to continue expanding.

The industry overall enjoyed a 21 percent growth in revenue over 1998, in what was generally written off by industry watchers as a sluggish year for the market.

Of course, a lot of that was in the euphemistically named "casual market."

But that's a good thing. The core market of PC gamers is growing with each purchase of *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* and **RollerCoaster Tycoon**.

One of our industry's most regrettable drawbacks is the enormous hurdle that the technology presents to newbies. If we can get everyone's grandmother enjoying nice simple computer bridge games, then publishers will have the mass profits to justify the continued development and growth of the hardcore market — giving Grandma the tools, interface, and ability to enjoy a game of any style, type or genre.

One hand washes the other. It's like the mafia. The publishers know there's a solid audience in hardcore gaming, but without mass-market profits to justify the operation, it's a significantly tougher proposal.

So cheer for those *Barbie Fashion Designer* and *Monopoly* blockbusters. We're all in this together.

Online gaming alone generated $500 million in revenues in 1999.

That was with only a handful of breakout titles. That was for a newborn industry. PC owners continue to report in surveys that they use their PCs for games more than for any other application, including **E-mail and Web surfing**. I couldn't even believe it at first, but it's true.

Chris Charla, a very bright guy who runs a couple of gaming magazines at Imagine Media, recently suggested to me that games are at a crucial crossroads: they will either grow into a cultural force like movies and TV (where much of it is crap, but there are major profits) or recede into the cultural ghetto of art forms like comic books, where much of it may well be wonderful art but nobody outside a hardcore fan base cares.

Of course, in Japan, comic books are a huge cultural force. The reason? In Japan, there are comic books for every conceivable reader. Romance books and samurai books and sitcom books and science-fiction books and choo-choo-train books.

52 CONTROL/INTERFACE

Not limited by any need for a large installed base of hardware peripherals, PC developers can deploy a vast variety of interfaces and control schemes through the keyboard and mouse (to speak nothing of applications for joystick, gamepad, steering wheel, and other PC toys). Because of the freedom of control schemes, there is practically no limit to the creativity and variety of game designs made feasible by these products for the PC platform.

THE INTERNET WILL UNLOCK WORLDS OF DEPTH AND DRAMA.

Incidentally, this model applies to the Japanese and their absolute culture-wide love affair with games. Over there they have romance games and samurai games and sitcom games and science-fiction games and choo-choo-train games.

Therein lies the future of PC gaming in the United States.

The subject matter of our games has to be broadened. And by this I don't mean "an RTS set in the Zulu wars" or "an RPG based on Sherlock Holmes" or any other tiny tweak to a pre-existing niche.

Actually, I would like to see an RTS set in the Zulu wars. But I'm getting off-track.

What we need are games about everything. Games about life. Games about everything under the sun. We need more ideas like **The Sims**. Except even more fun. Games that continually reinvent their genres and give birth to new ones.

Wouldn't movies get boring if there were only war movies, shoot-'em-ups, fantasies and sports stories? Yes, they would.

What else do PC games need to do? Simply, they just need to keep evolving as they are. There's definitely one thing they must not do, and that is to underestimate the market-shaping power of the online world.

(Not to fear; if anything, the industry is currently erring on the side of caution, scaling back on most of their off-line projects and leaning more and more toward online-only strategies.)

The near-term will be scary for a lot of people in the industry — a lot of the smaller players won't survive the next two years.

But the shakeout will leave behind strong, secure publishers who will best be able to capitalize on the marketable features of tomorrow's PC games.

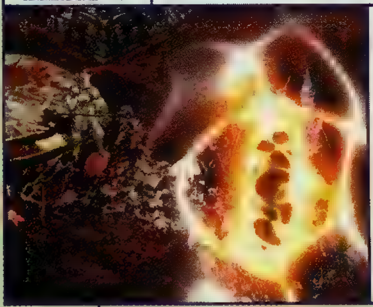
And the cycle will roll back around. When it does, sooner rather than later, it will bring games capable of drawing us into layers of addictive immersiveness that we can only begin to fantasize about. **It will bring games that make the PC sing.**

And that's the state of our union.

As the new wave of consoles arrives and matures, the PC will be introducing stunning new technologies and genre-bending games that re-imagine what can be done with a piece of entertainment software, coupled with the amazing power of a piece of entertainment hardware.

The Internet will unlock worlds of unparalleled depth and drama...it's the real reason why the PC will be the gaming platform of the new century.

DIABLO II



The online communities that spring up around much-anticipated games like *Diablo II* ensure rabid fans who can make superstars out of design teams.

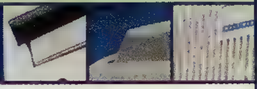
Fast Internet connections and massively multiplayer designs allow for the full utilization of the Internet's gaming potential. With half a billion dollars generated in 1999 by online gaming, this fast-growing segment of the PC games market is poised to explode over the next several years into a significant new form of mass entertainment.

It's an exciting union of which to be a part. From the first *Pong* duel to the latest massively multiplayer RPG, the PC has repeatedly reinvigorated its devotees with revolutions in gaming.

The next will also be the biggest.

And we can hardly wait. **PCG**

87 STORAGE



With PC hard drives expanding to galactic dimensions, there's really no limit to the amount of stuff that can reside on your system at any given time. The huge full installs permitted by this storage space is providing room for the kinds of high-resolution in-game movies and vast gameworld expansions that make modern PC games such immersive places to explore.

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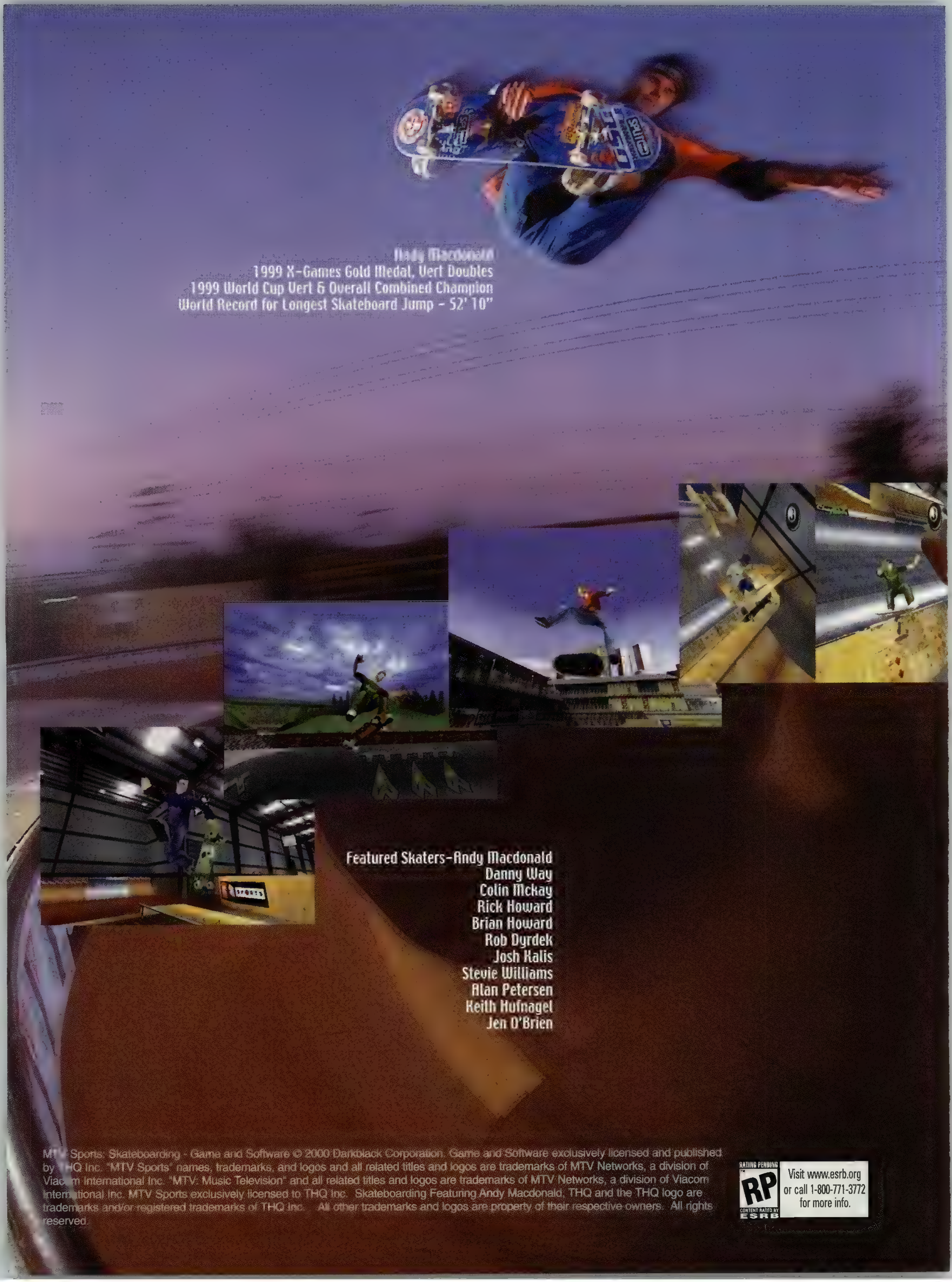
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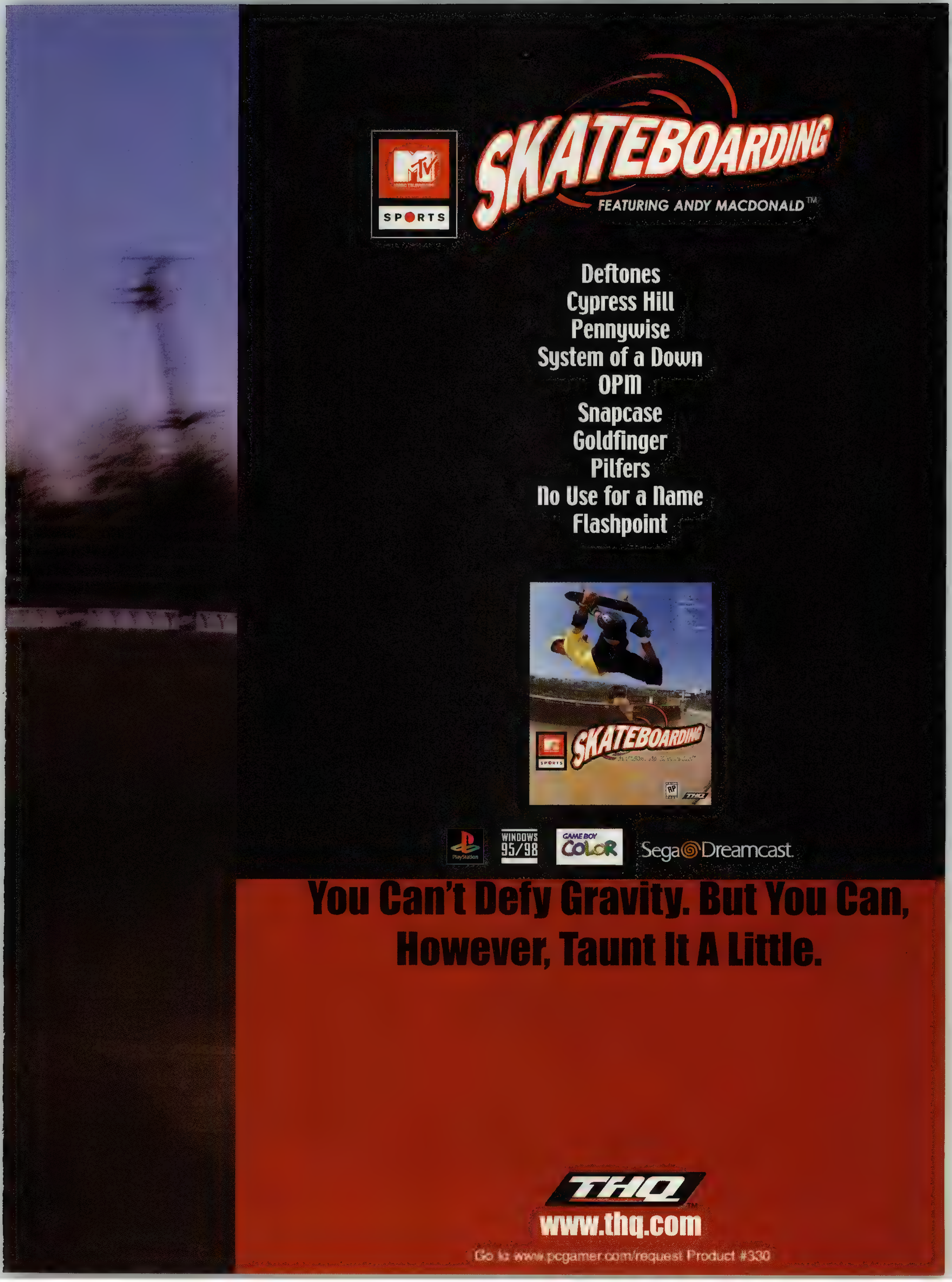
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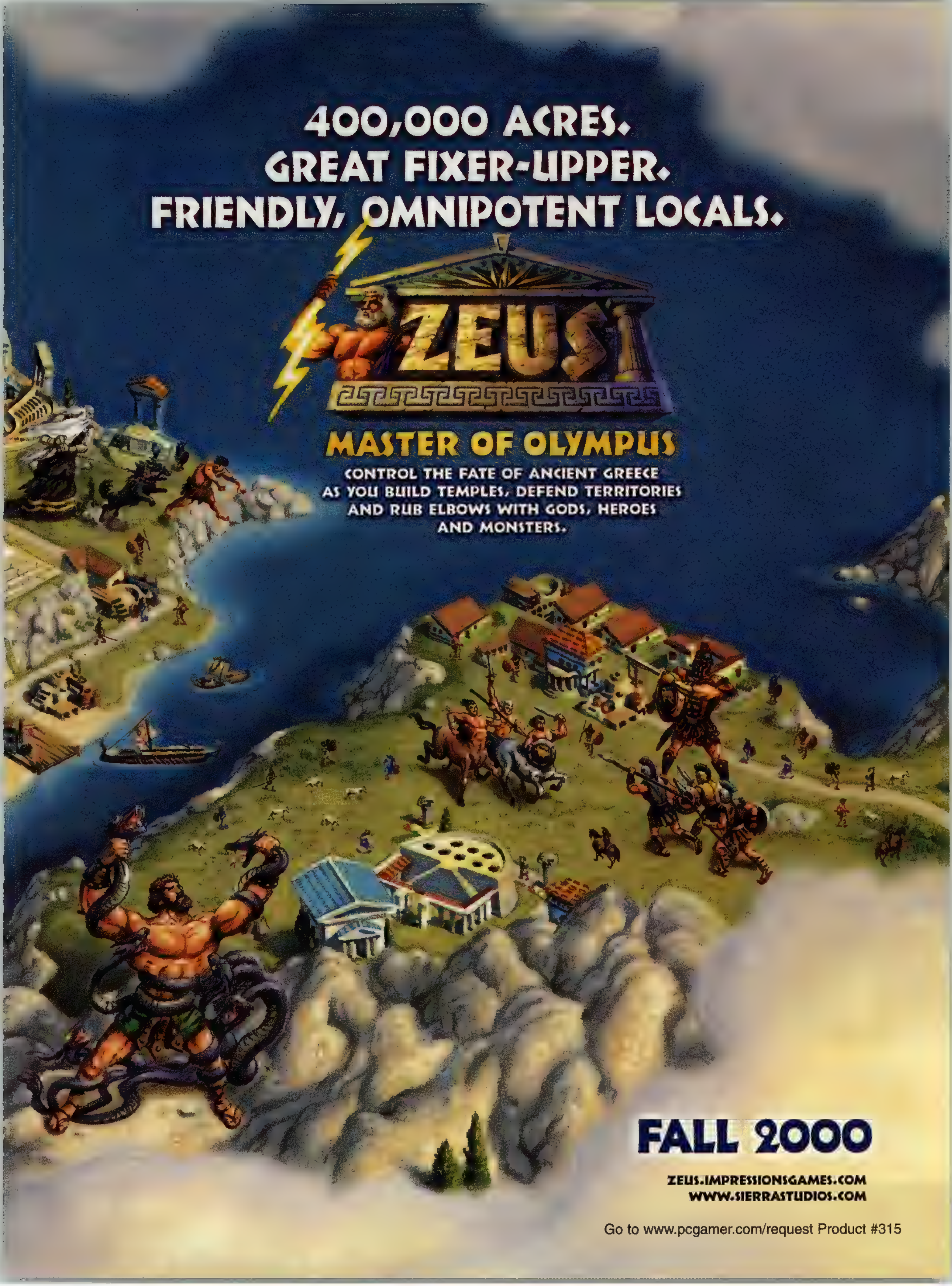

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One Challenge Too Many

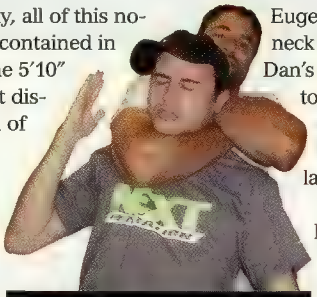
Daniel Morris, our young executive editor, is a student of the "reality combat" system of Brazilian jiu-jitsu and a big fan of the Ultimate Fighting Championship. Dan regularly comes into work bruised and limping from long nights of *vale tudo* ("everything goes") fight training *(or pummelings from the 10-year olds who hang out in front of his apartment; we're not convinced which — Ed).* Bizarrely, all of this no-holds-barred belligerence is contained in an unimposing frame of some 5′10″ and 150 pounds — a size that disqualifies him from his dream of competing in the UFC.

But Dan got to live his masochistic desire recently, when UFC middleweight fighter Eugene Jackson was in the Imagine offices for a Dreamcast press event. Eugene is a really nice guy and a laid-back person, not the kind you think of when you think "cage fighter." A fan of *PC Gamer*, Eugene stopped by to say hello.

Dan immediately recognized him and challenged him to a friendly brawl. Eugene, being a professional and a decent human being, declined. But Dan wouldn't let it go. Determined to provoke aggression, Dan finally badgered him into a bout.

With an almost dismissive sigh, Eugene grabbed Dan around the neck and applied a sleeper choke. Dan's head turned the color of a tomato and looked like it might explode. He tapped out instantly. The entire "fight" lasted about eight seconds.

Dan claims he only lost because he was wearing a cursed *NextGen* T-shirt. We say...head back to the dojo, Dan. You're clearly not yet ready for the big show.


UFC middleweight Eugene Jackson finishes with a vengeance.

Hardware Requirements

With each *PC Gamer* review in this issue, you'll find two very important pieces of information: the game's minimum hardware requirements and the hardware configurations we recommend as the *least* you'll need to really enjoy the game. While a game will run on the minimum system the manufacturer specifies, it might not run all that well. Because of this, we test each game on several systems so we can bring you a more realistic assessment of what you'll *really* need.

NEW AND IMPROVED RATING SYSTEM

Only the greatest should be rewarded with our coveted Editors' Choice award, and this tweak to the rating system reflects that. Now, at a glance at the score box on each page, you can see where the game fits in to the great gaming scheme of quality.

100%–90% EDITORS' CHOICE

We're battening down the hatches and limiting our coveted Editors' Choice Award to games that score a 90 or higher. It's not easy to get here, and darn near impossible to get near 100. Games in this range come with our unqualified recommendation, an unreserved must-buy score.

89%–80% EXCELLENT

These are excellent games. Anything that scores in this range is well worth your purchase, and is likely a great example of its genre. This is also a scoring range where we might reward specialist/niche games that are real breakthroughs in their own way.

79%–70% GOOD

These are pretty good games, which we'd recommend to fans of the particular genre, although it's a safe bet there are probably better options out there.

69%–60% ABOVE AVERAGE

A reasonable, above-average game. It might be worth buying, but probably has a few significant flaws that limit its appeal.

59%–50% MERELY OKAY

Very ordinary games. Not completely worthless, but there are likely numerous better places to spend your gaming dollar.

49%–40% TOLERABLE

Poor quality. Only a few slightly redeeming features keep it from falling into the abyss of the next category.

39%–0% DON'T BOTHER

Just terrible. And the lower you go, the more worthless you get. Avoid these titles like the plague, and don't say we didn't warn you!

GAME OF THE MONTH

Each issue, we select a very special game as Game of the Month. This is reserved for the product that most completely captured our hearts and minds. To earn this mark, your game can't merely be Editors' Choice quality...that's a given. We're looking for something spectacular. And for this issue, the winner is...

DIABLO II

p.74

EDITORS' CHOICE

Every month, we honor the best games we see with our Editors' Choice award. It's not easy to earn, and there are a lot of excellent games that fall just short of the honor. So when you see the *PCG* Editors' Choice logo on a game at a local software shop, you can bet it's among the best.

ALLEGIANCE

p.95

PGA CHAMPIONSHIP

p.98

CATEGORY	Roleplaying	REQUIRED	P233, 32MB RAM, 650MB hard-drive space, DirectX compatible card
DEVELOPER	Blizzard North	WE RECOMMEND	PII 400, 128MB RAM, 3D accelerator, 1.55GB hard-drive space
PUBLISHER	Blizzard	MAXIMUM PLAYERS	8

Diablo II

Game of the Month PC GAMER August 2000

"And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Diablo, and Hell followed with him..."

Whoever said "It's better to have loved and lost than to have never loved at all" was clearly a sad, lonely boob. Believe me, I know what this sort of loss feels like. For me, it's shortly after Memorial Day weekend, and Rob Smith and I have just returned from a trip down to Blizzard's offices where I played through and finished the complete shipping version of *Diablo II*. Now I'm back, disc-less, waiting for the box copies to arrive before rekindling my affair.

Why didn't you hear about it? Because Blizzard, in an attempt to track sales better and cut down on piracy, decided to release the game to the whole Earth at the same time, and language translations take a while. For security reasons (What? We're not trustworthy?), I played the game in Blizzard's office, so I started from scratch, installed what I now refer to as "The Best Game Ever," and didn't emerge until I was done.

Dirty rotten Diablo

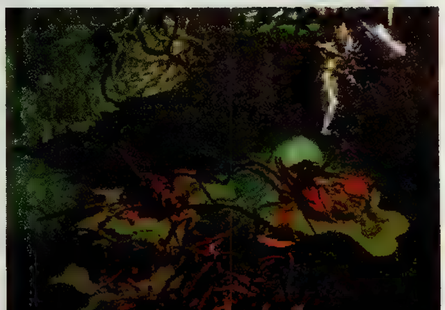
In case you're one of the three people out there (you know who you are) that never played the original *Diablo*, it was an action-RPG hybrid that pit you against Diablo, The Lord of Terror, and his evil minions. After opening up a big can of whoop-ass on him at the very end, the soul stone that had been driven into the skull of King Leoric's son (who had been Diablo's vessel throughout the game), was dropped. Since you figured that you were a pretty big bad-ass, you thrust the stone into your own head, trying to contain Diablo where the young child before you had failed. Traveling east, weakened by the powers of evil, you left the town of Tristram, telling your friends: "The time has come to leave this place. My brothers await me in the east. Their chains shall bind no longer." Interestingly, the good people of Tristram had been under the impression that you had no family....

In *Diablo II*, it turns out that after The Wanderer (the character you played) left fair Tristram, all manner of hell broke loose in the city once again. This time, however, it seems that demons and monsters are loose everywhere, and no one is sure of the cause. This is where the new adventure begins. Instead of continuing the journey through the eyes of The Wanderer, *Diablo II* introduces a new hero (you) selected from five new classes. There's the barbarian, a hulking man that fights with anything he can lay his mitts on. The amazon is a wiz at using spears and bowed weapons (similar to the rogue in the original). Next comes the paladin, the ultimate holy warrior, in command of large weapons and godly magic. Naturally, there's also a strong magic user, the sorceress. And finally, arguably the coolest new character, we have the necromancer; while relatively weak himself, he can call up all manor of minions, either from the bones of those he's slain, or right

Finding items on the ground used to be a pain. No longer! Now, if you hit your "Alt" key, you're shown what and where the items are.

Though you'll have to put this page really close to your ear to hear it, the music and sound effects in the game are ghoulishly sinister — just the way we like 'em!

"Man, I knew I should have worked on building up my fire resistance a bit more!"



Spiders grow big and nasty in the land of *Diablo II*. They're also poisonous, so watch out!

Quests are no longer randomized. Each time you play, they'll be the same, though you don't have to complete all of them to beat the game.

from the earth itself. Not only do these characters represent great variety so you can play through the game several times, but they're also extremely well constructed both physically in the expertly animated character models and mentally with the depth of their skill tree options.

Them characters sure are fancy

Diablo II really makes strides in personalizing your character (a good thing given how long you're going to spend in that character's company). With three skill sets for each class, and ten skills within those trees, the opportunity for specialization, and thus greatly varied characters, is fantastic.

My amazon (I called her Mrs. Vederman) began with only a pin-prick spear, and every time I went up a level (accomplished by gaining experience from slaughtering the nefarious foes inhabiting the wilderness), I got five points to distribute between my four primary attributes, and one additional point to assign to a skill. Certain skills require that you reach a specific level before learning them, and on top of that, most of the stronger skills require that you put points in other, prerequisite skills, before being able to put points into them. Each skill runs 20 points deep, and increases in power each time another point is added. And with each classes' 30 unique skills, you'd have to build your character all the way up to the 600th level before maxing them all out! And just so you know, I was only level 25 when I beat the game in normal mode. Obviously, then, it pays to specialize.

As an amazon, I was adept at using spears and bows, but by adding points to my skills, I specialized my use of them even further. The first couple of times I leveled up, I put skill points into the Magic Arrow skill. Unfortunately, an hour or so into the game, I hadn't found any fancy bows. So, I decided to shift my focus to getting my spear skills up to snuff. From that point on, the spear, and several of the skills that apply to it, became my strongest ally. With skills in three sets, there's a strategic edge to building your specialization that wonderfully balances your own power-hungry desires and the realization that you may need to boost certain skills if your ass is taking a whomping.

Boosting the four attributes is also a strategic game of short-term desire pitched against long-term development. It's tempting to boost your Strength early in all classes (bar sorceress) for that extra damage, but Dexterity increases the effectiveness of your attacks, Vitality boosts your hit points, and Energy fills your well of magic. Remember,

THE TRANSMUTATOR

Not to give anything away, but it's a magical device used for combining items of all different sorts into new ones. Unfortunately, when you find it, you're only given a few instructions on how this works. Once, I made the mistake of placing my favorite spear in it along with a few different low-quality gems for good measure, and hit the "transmute" button to see what would happen. Suddenly there was a flash of light, and presto, I had lost my damn spear! In its place was a high-quality gem. But I didn't want a high-quality gem! I was hoping to make a cool new spear! That learned me. Since Blizzard wants people to figure out how the device works on their own, I'm not using the stupid thing again until someone gives me specific instructions based on their experiences with it! So, please, give it a try and tell me what happens!

The cube in my inventory is the transmutator. On the left is what it looks like when open.

UNIQUES, SET ITEMS, GEMS

Death's Guard
Sash
Defense: 22
Durability: 24 of 24
Required Level: 6
Cannot Be Frozen
+20 Defense
Death's Disguise
Death's Touch
Death's Guard
Death's Hand

As in the original *Diablo*, unique items abound in the new game. This time, there's also a new subset of unique items known as "set" items. What we know about them is that they're extremely rare, and that when you equip all of the items in a given set (say a helmet, belt, shield, and breast plate, for example), a new, previously unknown stat or ability will accompany it.

When you find set items on the ground, you'll know straight away because its text will be green. Once you've identified the item, it will then tell you what other pieces you need to complete the set. Many of these set pieces are extremely powerful in and of themselves — even without the other pieces. Sure, you may find them in treasure chests or on monsters, and you may also gamble and come up lucky, but such is their rarity you'll likely have to use the trading system online to round out that set.

Gems are another new feature in the game. In the course of your travels, you're going to find socketed armor and weapons. These sockets are there to be filled with magic power-imbuing gems. There are many different types of gems and five quality levels, and they all do different things. Be careful, though! Once you put a gem into a socketed item, you can't remove it, so make sure you know what you're doing prior to installing one.

"Look Ma, I've been poisoned!" Whenever this happens, your health meter turns green, as does your vision.

many of the best items require that you have a certain number of points in specific attributes before you can use them. There is real depth to the building of your character!

Ooh, what's new?

While the core of *Diablo II* stays true to its forbearer, there are numerous other new features. For starters, the game is about four times larger than before, and ships on three CDs, spanning three entire Acts — each Act looks entirely different and is longer and harder than the last — leading to the grand finale (which is not really a complete Act). While it took me about 27 hours total to beat the game, expect your play time to range from around 30 to 40 hours, depending on whether or not you stop to smell the roses.

Because of the sheer size of the areas, you can now run or use the randomly located waypoint system. Running lets you haul-ass, but it's a well-balanced, limited ability that forces you to watch your rapidly decreasing stamina bar and quaff potions or stop for a breather. The waypoints allow you to travel to and from it and the town in an instant — it's incredibly useful in speeding up corpse retrievals. Speaking of death, be aware, that when you die, you're penalized a certain amount of gold depending on your character level — even if you keep your gold in your stash. What's a stash? It's a box that you'll find in every town that allows you to store a few items and a whole lot of gold, so you

DEFEATING DIABLO OR, HOW TWO PC GAMER EDITORS S

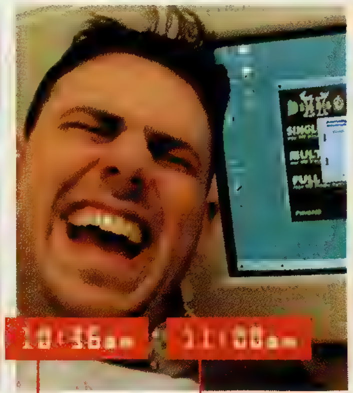
5.25.00

10:00am

Rob and I stroll into Blizzard's Irvine, California, office to play *Diablo II*; the US version had gone gold just days earlier.

10:34am

Rob and I inspect the three magical discs of love that contain within them, that rat-bastard Diablo.



10:36am

I begin installing the game on my computer.

11:00am

I begin playing. Here come the good lovin'.

1:35–2:15pm

Rob and I eat a tasty pizza.

5:03pm

I'm fully kicking Rob's ass in a race to see who can beat the game first, and have just finished Act I.

8:12pm

Still in Act II, it's time to call it a day. But we'll be back tomorrow. Oh yes. We will.

I'm not saying what's behind me here, but what's down these steps, my friend, is Hell.

(thankfully) don't litter the ground with junk as you did in Tristram. It's a "realism" call that adds more character development thinking to your decisions: do I sell, or stash; and if I stash, what do I sell to make the space…?

In each new town, there's always a healer of some sort, one who sells and repairs weapons, and someone to identify items. Buying junk from NPCs has been better streamlined by being able to see the items in the trade window. This useful feature is made more exciting when you realize just how much your character's on-screen appearance is dependent on what items you have equipped. Just find a really cool looking new helmet? It could change your look completely. These little touches are incredibly effective at helping you connect with your character.

Surely it's a sign of the times, but in each town there's a trader/gambler character. This guy is also waiting, just like my bookie, to take your cash. Through an ordinary trade screen, the only information you're given about the items on view is their cost — and the prices are always sky high. Once you've paid for the item, its attributes are revealed. In my experience, the gamble left me with an overpriced piece of junk. But every once in a while it pays out big, rewarding you with a supremely powerful, possibly unique item. If you're loaded (the amount of gold you can store in your stash increases with level), it's a great way to throw away loose change for the chance of something really cool for your character.

GLOAM
Drains Mana

Like all shrines, you'll get extra powers for fending off baddies like this mana-sucking gloam.

These fire-breathing bastards in Act III will wipe the floor with you if you aren't careful.

Doom Caster

Hell is where the heart is: Still, it's not exactly the friendliest place in all of the universe.

OLVED DIABLO II IN 27 HOURS OF HARDCORE GAMING...

Only a few hours earlier, downing a some brews with Rob had seemed like a good idea…

5.26.99
9:08am
9:12am

Rob and I stumble into the Blizzard office, bleary-eyed but ready for battle.

Hung over and still slightly drunk, I fully believe that, as the rightful heir to the throne (a throne, some throne, I wasn't really sure. I just knew in my heart that I was royalty), I try to remove the sword in Blizzard's reception area from its stone.

Perhaps I'm not royalty after all.... Rob, on the other hand, easily proves why he's Editor-in-Chief, declaring: "When I left you, Vederman, I was but the learner. Now I am the master."

"Only a master of evil, Rob!"

Rob and I are back to *Diablo II*.

MrsVederman
Level 26 Amazon
Normal
Nightmare
Hell
Exit
Delete
OK

NIGHTMARE AND HELL

After beating the big bad guy the first time around, your game isn't over. How about starting a new Nightmare game with your existing character? In this mode, you'll fight considerably more difficult monsters that, while being as evil as ever before, are nice enough to drop a lot more gold! As an added bonus, various unique items will only be attainable in this advanced setting. With Diablo your bitch for a second time — you guessed right – you get to start over in Hell mode where the game gets insanely difficult, but once again, there's the incentive of more unique items and more experience.

Of all the new elements, the graphics are the only feature that could be considered disappointing. No matter how fast your computer is, the game only runs at 640x480 with 256 colors (and on one of our test machines — a PII 300 Celeron with a GeForce card — it chugged chronically at times). What became very apparent to me, though, after moving beyond Act I (which was created some two years ago), was that the graphics get much better. Once you move into Act II, the detail in the artwork is amazing, and it improves further through Act III and into the finale. Plus, if you've got a 3D accelerator, *Diablo II* makes limited use of it by giving you more realistic shadows and snazzier spell effects. And, if you're into it, you can even enable a special "perspective" mode that makes the sprite-based backgrounds in the game move in relation to your character with a subtle parallax type effect. The good news is that even at its worst, the graphics aren't bad enough to be a distraction to the gameplay.

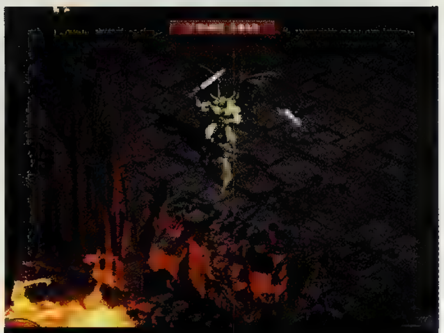
You feel healthy.

I do *not* feel healthy! Spell effects in *Diablo II* are out of this world.

Me, my friends, and a dungeon

Regardless of how important multiplayer gaming is to you, the significant enhancements are sure to please. Modem and LAN play are options, though most of the multiplayer focus is on battle.net. Now you can play with as many as seven of your friends at the same time, and the client-server model should mean that games are cheat-free (though you can't use that character anywhere else). As an added benefit of playing with a closed character, once you've beaten the game in this mode, you'll have the option of creating a new Hardcore character. This mode plays just like any other with one key difference: if you die, that's it — your character is gone for good, no saving, no calling Blizzard and pleading with them to revive you. Personally, I'd probably cry if my 25th-level amazon bit the dust and I had to start all over, but, if you're a masochist with cajones the size of bowling balls, be my guest!

Luckily for me (and you, if multiplayer isn't your favorite element of the game... Doh! Did I really say that out loud? Don't hate me for preferring the single player experience!) an "open" game option lets you play on battle.net with your buddies, and bring your single-player character online. Now, as you might imagine, cheating will be more of likelihood in these "open" games since the character data is stored on your own machine, but I think it's a small price to pay for bragging opportunities with your souped-up single-player hero.



Here's another small tasted of what Hell has in store for you. Mmm, fire and brimstone....

...AND LIVED TO TELL THE WHOLE DISGUSTING, CLAW

5.27.00

2:19pm

I've completed Act II and am moving on to Act III.

7:29-8:04pm

Rob and I feast on some tasty Chinese food. Mmm, spicy.

11:36pm

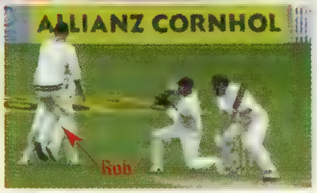
Now that I'm well into playing through Act III, it's time, once again, to call it a day.

11:50pm

Rob and I are dining at the IHOP next to our hotel when the unthinkable happens... Rob has splashed coffee on his pants.

9:00am

Today, I'm all alone. Rob flies back up to the Bay Area early in the morning to play cricket and soccer with some of his chums and to discuss lofty topics in the Queen's English over a nice spot of tea.



9:24am

Time to get through Act III and move on to the finale.

11:14am

Act III is in my pocket; it's time to move on to Act IV where that coward Diablo has been hiding from me.

11:58am

No time for breaks, I eat my food at the desk today.

BY THE NUMBERS

Stun Attack

Made of wood, these guys pack a strong punch!

- >> Number of different monsters (including name and color changes): Roughly 300
- >> Number of monsters models: Roughly 70
- >> Number of skills: 150 (30 per character)
- >> Number of units shipped worldwide: 1.5 million
- >> Number of units shipped in US: 600,000
- >> Number of people listed in the beta test credits: 1,000
- >> Number of hours it took Greg to complete the game: Roughly 27
- >> Number of levels he gained up to its completion: 25
- >> Number of cans of soda consumed while Rob and Greg played: 26
- >> Number of times Greg died as an amazon: 14 (mostly while trying to kill Diablo)
- >> Number of times Rob Smith died as a necromancer: 47 (mostly while crying like a little girl)

There are many different types of skeletons in *Diablo II*. The ones I'm fighting here are fire-enhanced for your pleasure.

Player killing and adventuring together is much more refined now. You begin multi-player adventures neutral toward all other players — you can't attack them and they can't attack you. To become a heinous PK-er, you have to go into town and declare hostility. Now, you can kill or be killed by that other character any time you are outside of town (and the other characters will be alerted to the status change). Conversely, it's also possible to party with your friends and have everyone within the same Act accumulate experience points together.

Trading with other players online has also been much improved since the first game. Using the same system as *EverQuest* uses, you place items in a trade window, and the other player does the same. Once both players hit "accept" the sale goes through. Holy forced morality, Batman!

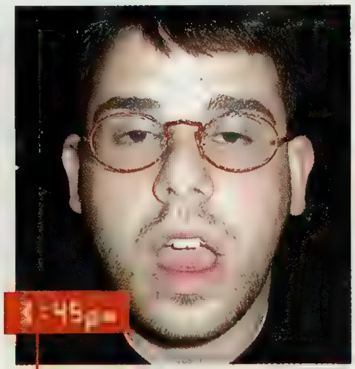
After all this, there's still a million-and-one more great features that I could blabber on about. Thought the first *Diablo* didn't have enough monsters? This time, there's at least three times more (about 300 creatures of different skins and names and more than 70 models). Think the monsters were too small? This time some of them are gob-smackingly huge. Wish you could hire NPCs to fight along side you? Pay the man. Really, other than the slightly dated graphics, there's next to nothing to complain about; *Diablo II* is *Diablo* on steroids. Everything you loved about the first game is here — the random dungeons, the perfect kill/ reward balance, the sore index finger on your mousing hand.... The new features don't break a thing, and only serve to make *Diablo II* a bigger, more fully featured and complete version of its predecessor. Don't waste a minute longer thinking about it, just go out and buy a copy. If you don't like it, I'll eat an... um, no, not an orc... we've said that before, um, I'll eat an amazon! Yeah, that's more my style!

— *Greg Vederman*

STROPHOBIC, GROTESQUE TALE

Congratulations!
You Have Vanquished Diablo
MrsVederman
Will Henceforth Be Known As
Dame MrsVederman

A winner is me! I've wiped that dingle-berry Diablo free from the butt-crack of hell! Woo-hoo! Now I'm hungry for more — bring on the nightmare setting!



Weakened, sleepy, and elated after 27-plus of the best hours of my young life, I collapse into a deep, delirious sleep, overjoyed with my victory.

FINAL VERDICT

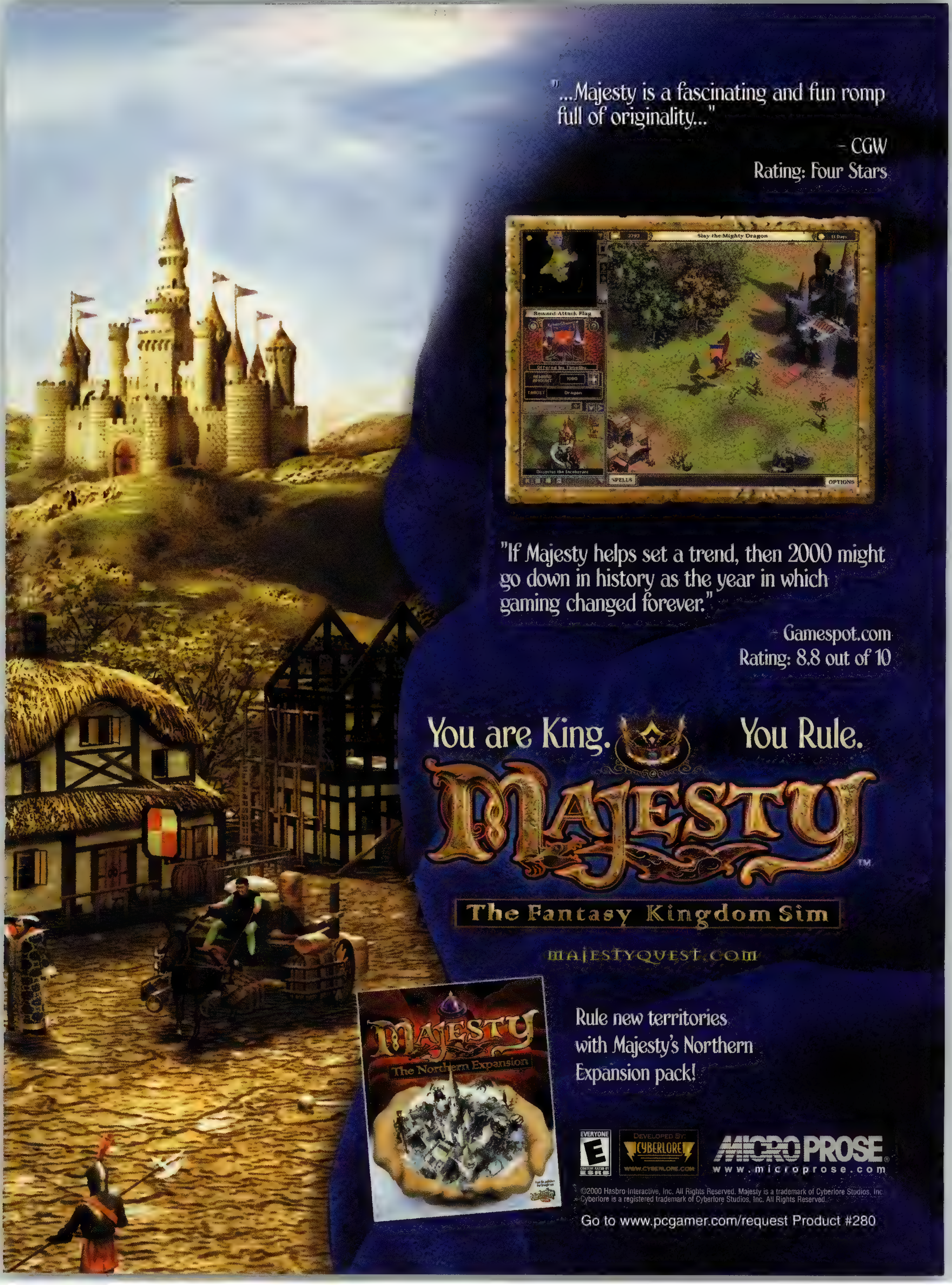
HIGHS: At least three times as large as the original; great customizable characters; better-animated enemies; fantastic multiplayer options.

LOWS: Dated graphics by today's standard.

BOTTOM LINE: Don't steal, but lie and cheat if necessary. As a gamer, it's your duty to own *Diablo II*.

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE **94%**

it RULETH.
"It's the perfect real-time strategy game...one of the most important new RTS games in a long time."
- Gamecenter.com
Rating: 8 out of 10
"...it's the perfect title for jaded RTS fans that need a breath of fresh air!"
- PC.IGN.com
Rating: 8.4 out of 10
"...oozes innovative ideas and gamplay... gamers will appreciate this rare treat"
- Games Domain
Rating: Silver Medal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CATEGORY	First-person shooter	**REQUIRED**	P233, 32MB RAM, 200MB HD space, 4MB OpenGL-compliant 3D card
DEVELOPER	ION Storm	**WE RECOMMEND**	PII 400, 64MB RAM, 16MB OpenGL-compliant 3D card
PUBLISHER	Eidos Interactive	**MAXIMUM PLAYERS**	32

Daikatana

John Romero's opus takes its bow. Let's face it — who isn't curious to find out how the final game turned out?

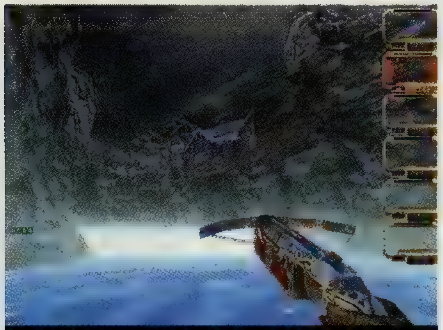
Wow. Here it spins in my CD-ROM drive — *Daikatana*, a nondescript, orange compact disc, containing years of effort from dozens of designers (most of whom moved on to greener pastures during the lengthy development process). After all is said and done, there's a game waiting at the end. As everyone will painfully recall, John Romero promised to make me his bitch, and after three years of waiting, I was ready to be violated.

The game kicks off in a futuristic Kyoto, Japan, which has been reduced to a neo-industrial conglomerate ruled under the iron fist of mega-corporation head Osaka Mishima (who, coincidentally enough, looks and speaks just like Lo Pan from John Carpenter's *Big Trouble in Little China*). You assume the role of Hiro Miyamoto, a down-on-his-luck Kendo teacher, struggling to make ends meet while maintaining his cool, iron-jawed demeanor.

The military training base is swamped with these gun-toting fiends.

Late one night, Miyamoto is approached by an elderly gent named Ebihara (who must be voiced by *Shadow Warrior*'s Lo Wang), who informs him that the present day has been twisted and warped by the evil Mishima. Apparently, it's Hiro's destiny to confront Mishima and retrieve the Daikatana — a magical time-hopping sword forged by the Ebiharas thousands of years ago.

At this point, courtesy Ninjas drop from the sky and beat the bejeezus out of Hiro, and drop him into a makeshift graveyard on the outskirts of Mishima's turf. Fortunately, Mishima has been stupid enough to leave a powerful "Ion Ripper" weapon approximately three feet from where you land. If you're reading this magazine, you should have a pretty good idea of what comes next, eh? And that's the nutshell of this "story-driven" FPS.


Yeah, this scene looks placid, but just wait until the mutated critters come out to play.

Getting to the Big Man ain't gonna be easy, though — this evil Mishima chap has some kind of sick fetish with creating robotic animals. He obviously gets a big discount on Evil Cyber-Frogs when he buys them in bulk from the distributor; the first few levels are packed to the brim with the damn things. When you turn a corner, you will find an evil frog. When you open a door, you will find more evil frogs. Blast open a wall, and chances are very good that evil frogs are awaiting your appearance.

After an hour of nuking cyber-Kermits and trudging through what looks like a terrible *Quake II* user mod, Hiro finally meets up with the man who promises to liberate him from this tedious hole of rehashed gameplay — "Superfly" Johnson (cough, cough). Mr. Johnson is the ex-head of Mishima's security, and has been portrayed with the same racial sensitivity as the characters in the feature film *I'm Gonna Git You Sucka*. He also serves as the first of the in-game "sidekicks" who stay by your side and fight with you.

After hooking up with Superfly and busting Ebihara's lovely daughter Mikiko out of Mishima's prison, there's some time-traveling to be done. You're dropped back into the days of Ancient Greece. The gameplay continues to be fairly uninteresting

Mikiko stands at the ready, prepared to scream and run in terror at the appearance of bad guys.

"Check it out — if you press it right here, he kicks!" These surgeons won't bother you in your quest.

ARMOR
100
HEALTH
78
AMMO
0
LEVEL

Shades of *The Matrix*? A wretched biomechanical creation like this brings a festive tone to any evil warlord's living room.

here as well — but now you've got a new set of lackluster weapons, and evil skeletons have replaced the robo-frogs. While the levels' blockiness may be realistic for the time-frame of each era, anything that reminds me of the LEGO castles I built as a kid can't be good.

After defeating a dozen levels' worth of skeletons, evil spiders, and English-speaking Grecian guards, it's onwards in time to Dark Ages Europe. Here, you defeat evil rats, evil bats, and more evil guards. Finally you arrive in futuristic Alcatraz, where you defeat evil crazed prisoners, and then an evil boss. Much like your average drunken Japanese salaryman at a karaoke bar, this game does not know when to stop.

One thing's for sure: there is an huge amount of gaming to be done in *Daikatana*. Each of the four episodes features its own set of weapons, textures, and monsters, and could be passed off as an average-sized game on its own. On the other hand, while there's a lot of "content" in *Daikatana*, there's also a lot of "content" in the 48-chapter *Sonic the Hedgehog versus Aliens* fan-fiction series, so we know that more does not always equal better. Actually, I get the impression that *Daikatana*'s epic feel is more of a result of slow-paced, find-the-lever gameplay, and the sheer amount of time it takes to ensure that your moron sidekicks get from point A to point B without getting their skulls split open.

That's right — neither Superfly nor Mikiko are terribly helpful in your quest. In theory, both characters should follow you around and provide backup during heavy-fire situations. Unfortunately, the *Quake II* engine was never really built for this type of behavior, and the sidekicks never present themselves as more than slightly retarded AI entities who need to be babysat 24/7. You can give them basic orders via hotkeys; they'll attack, retreat, or pick up certain items if you tell them to, and even climb ladders and crawl through passageways (but they won't jump). Unfortunately, there are no commands for "Don't get crushed by the swinging door" or "Stop humping the corner of the room, dimwit."

Meet Superfly Johnson. You'll need to bust your buddy out of this torture device if you want him to help you out.

Your partners also verbally berate you whenever you bump into them, which seems to happen at a frequency of twenty times per minute. I can only imagine how much sooner this game would have shipped had the sidekicks gotten the axe. Nevertheless, you'd better get used to them — they'll be tagging along, delivering poorly written banter and giving you headaches for around three-quarters of the game. (The only line that solicited a giggle was Superfly's threat of pounding me into "ass dust" if I accidentally shot him again.)

One easily overlooked aspect of *Daikatana* is the whole RPG aspect — you're actually getting something for mowing down hordes of demon frogs. Experience points are dished out whenever you dispatch an enemy, and you can allocate bonus points to abilities like speed, acrobatics, and power. If you opt to use the Daikatana for combat, the experience points are collected by the sword itself, resulting in one whoop-ass melee weapon at the end of the game.

Mmm. Blocky. Some of the *Daikatana* maps are a bit more awe-inspiring than others.

POWER
ATTACK
SPEED
VITALITY
0
ARMOR
+100
HEALTH
0
AMMO
0
LEVEL

Who needs Yanni when you've got giant robo-spiders ready to entertain you at the Acropolis?

Aside from pithy RPG elements, *Daikatana* also adds liberal amounts of frustration for anyone who wants to save their game whenever they want. Taking a page from those nefarious console games, you must pick up red "Save Gems" before you can make a record of your progress. I believe the majority of gamers will find this as appealing as a grapefruit-juice enema, especially when forced to replay hideous sequences over and over again (just wait until you get to the jumping puzzles — shudder).

Similarly snore-inducing is *Daikatana's* multiplayer deathmatching, which crams those pithy RPG nuggets into a plain-vanilla online beatdown. Yeah, there are some nice features — the maps scale based on the number of players, and "Death Tag" is fun for a few run-throughs, but the levels are pretty weak, and the weapon selection is just as gimpy as the single-player modes.

On the plus side, both you and a buddy can slog through the story in co-op mode — a feature that's been missing from a lot of FPS titles these days.

While the gameplay remains stale through all eight gajillion levels, the in-game visuals make frequent leaps between blah and beautiful. While some stages look like an amateur's first attempt at map-making, others force you to step back and admire the architecture. The *Daikatana* team managed to modify the *Quake II* engine to include volumetric fog, light flares, and wonderfully atmospheric rain and snow effects. The character textures are amazingly detailed, thanks in part to the uncredited current id Software texture artist, Kenneth Scott. Similarly top-notch is the soundtrack, a good percentage of which was composed by the also-invisible Will Loconto. I can only wonder how many people really contributed to *Daikatana* — I have a feeling that the actual staff is a good deal larger than the dozen fresh faces in the credits.

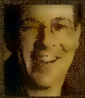
No matter how much we'd like to ignore the game's tortured history, the disc itself reminds us what a long, strange trip it's been — the readme file, penned by Romero himself, addresses the reader with the same nervous "Hey! We're buddies, aren't we? Ha-ha-ha!" attitude that a 10-year-old would adopt before telling his father that he just spilled a can of rubber cement on the new couch. I get the impression that *Daikatana* lives up to Romero's original vision for the game — and had the game been released in 1997, the gaming media would have been screaming in pleasure. If only John could use that replica Daikatana of his to teleport back to the past, and hand over the existing build to the bigwigs at Eidos to make the original Christmas '97 release date. As it stands, the release of *Daikatana* signals nothing more remarkable than the end of an era in fandom.

— *Colin Williamson*

The medieval level set is one of the more impressive areas in *Daikatana* — just watch for killer rats.

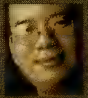
WHERE WERE YOU WHEN DAIKATANA WAS ANNOUNCED?

To try and gauge the full impact of *Daikatana's* development cycle, we polled some members of the *PC Gamer* staff to see what they were up to when the game was first announced back in 1997.



ROB was agreeing that *Daikatana* should be on the cover of the Sept. 1997 issue of *PC Games* magazine, due to its amazing concept and Christmas '97 release date!

DAN was the mailroom intern at *PC Games*. He thought it was amazing that people could make a living at computer games. *Daikatana* seemed okay.



LI was going through his sophomore year at college trying to figure out what kind of job he could possibly get with a degree in creative writing. Thank god for *PCG*!

JOE was getting free lift tickets and all the hot babes on the slopes of Banff, Canada, while working as art director of *TransWorld SNOWboarding* magazine.

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Size of maps/levels; co-op play; some good architecture; cool skins.

LOWS: Unimpressive monsters and weapons; rambling, slow gameplay; unimaginative throughout.

BOTTOM LINE: Next time, Eidos can just give thirty million dollars to me.

PC GAMER **53%**

MERELY OKAY

An RPG as Vast as Legend Itself.
"...one of the biggest RPGs ever."
— IGN.PC
Wizards & Warriors™
Encounter over 100 NPCs, battle 75 monsters, wield weapons and cast over 100 magic spells.
Create a party of six adventurers from 15 different classes, utilize 300 inventory items, including customizable pieces.
Embark on over 100 quests in 200 hours of gameplay, battling in real-time and turn-based combat.
RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Visit www.esrb.org or call 1-800-771-3772 for more info.
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Go to www.pcgamer.com/request Product #072

CATEGORY	Strategy	**REQUIRED**	P166, 32MB RAM, 500MB hard-drive space
DEVELOPER	Creative Assembly	**WE RECOMMEND**	PII 400, 128MB RAM, 8MB 3D accelerator card
PUBLISHER	EA Games	**MAXIMUM PLAYERS**	8

Shogun

You better believe that I *Ran* to my PC to install this excellent samurai battle game. *(Groan — Ed)*

When you picture the most awe-inspiring periods in the gruesome history of warfare, nothing comes closer to the jaw-dropping spectacle of the samurai battles of feudal Japan than *Shogun* (rendered so splendidly in Akira Kurosawa's *Ran*). This was an age of war in which the *bushido* ideals of noble conflict mixed with a colorful, pageant-like aesthetic to produce clashes of mesmerizing grandeur.

And now it's all on CD. Awesome. *Shogun: Total War*, from developer Creative Assembly, builds a 3D real-time strategy game on top of the classic turn-based strategy legacy of the Koei console epic *Nobunaga's Ambition*. The result is a huge-scale recreation of the decades-long war to unify sixteenth century Japan. And it's ten different kinds of fun.

Half of *Shogun* is played as a turn-based strategy game of the very classic sort, complete with a boardgame-style overview of Japan and its dozens of warring fiefdoms. Upon the death of the ruling Shogun in 1530, scads of second-tier warlords mobilize their fiefs, hoping to subjugate the other *daimyo* (warlords) and claim the Shogunate for themselves.

The other (and more hyped) half of *Shogun* is the 3D RTS battle format. This is the real meat of the game — the grand strategy only ever seems to be setting the table for the fights. And why not? They smoke.

But we should set the stage for the carnage to come by explaining the strategic umbrella beneath which the RTS develops. As *daimyo* of one of Japan's fragmented provinces, you have a lot to worry about before ever setting foot on the battlefield.

The strategic map board lets you track the development of your overall campaign. All the game's graphics are first-rate.

The essential unit of economic progress is *koku*, a measure of the amount of rice needed to fuel a person for one year. You raise armies by allocating *koku* to the construction of various military units. The lower-tier infantry are dirt-cheap, while more impressive units suck up your rice like Hoovers. The list is impressive: among the various units are archers (mounted and foot), musketeers and arquebusiers (primitive riflemen), heavily armored samurai cavalry, and of course the warrior monks, who cost a ton of rice but bring some kick-ass Zen stylings to the battle.

Diplomacy plays a big part in shaping the early flow of the game. It's a good idea to ally yourself with a neighbor, if only to eliminate the nightmare scenario of being surrounded by hostile fiefs. Alliances in *Shogun* aren't intricate affairs; there isn't much depth in trade negotiation (or any negotiation, for that matter), and it relies on a very simple "I'm your buddy" or "I'm not" kind of system. The simplicity of the diplomacy almost seems to be an accurate representation of the scroll-and-messenger style of government we've come to associate with this epoch.

There is lots of skullduggery to be accomplished. In a page borrowed straight from *Nobunaga's Ambition*, you can employ the services of ninja assassins to dispatch rival

Wow. The visual sweep and scope of these battles is mind-boggling.

Send your slutty geishas to woo rival warlords and then slit their punk throats. Cool!

War isn't pretty, even if the armor is. The zoomed-in views give you a real perspective on feudal combat.

warlords. This can result in either a clean assassination (and resulting discord in the rival fief) or it can fail and throw you immediately into war with the intended target. If a ninja seems like too big a risk, you can also send along a comely geisha girl to whack your rival. Mmm...death by geisha girl. And since the code of the samurai precludes the killing of women, the geisha can continue to wreak havoc even after a failed attempt (she can be taken out by another geisha — the two of them commit *seppuku* and both units are lost). In the long run, though, assassination isn't much of a factor in the game; it's more of an early-learning diversion.

A more important part of the grand-strategic game is the development of new structures, which in turn allow new advancements in unit construction.

When diplomacy fails (glorious, glorious moment!), it's time for war. This is accomplished on the grand boardgame screen, where figurines that actually slide like realistic wooden pieces on the map board represent your armies. I loved this touch. The designers are confident enough in the appeal of this whole system that they reverently display this element of *Shogun* as being part of a literal boardgame. It's really cool.

All told, the turn-based strategy game is fun without really wowing. There's nothing in it that I wasn't doing years ago on NES with *Nobunaga's Ambition*. The real-time battles, however, are a sight to see. The environments are stunning. Hills, valleys, rivers, ravines — the topography of Japan's mountainous terrain is lavishly rendered in a gorgeous 3D engine, viewable from any angle or altitude. There are 85 multiplayer maps, each presenting different tactical considerations like bridge crossings and castle defense.

The armies are amazing to watch. Grouped into units of footmen, mounted cavalry, and ranged attackers (archers and riflemen), the units consist of anywhere between 20 and 120 men. Each is a beautifully modeled soldier color-coded by his unit grouping with resplendent armor and decoration. Only at the closest zoom levels do they begin to pixelate; from the command view, you can pack thousands of individual troops and horses into a mind-boggling battle screen.

Terrain and unit type dovetail nicely to form the brunt of the tactical wargame. Elevation and defensive positions are key. Uphill marches leave troops winded and in bad shape for a fight at the top. Archers and gunmen get to rain down the apocalypse on enemies advancing across lower terrain. The presence of swift cavalry units for end-around runs becomes quickly apparent, as does the need for samurai infantry capable of breaking an infantry line in a frontal rush.

The control scheme is designed around the banners carried by a signalman in each unit. This cleverly reproduces the actual historical communications system of feudal warfare, which also relied on the visual cues of the banners to signal orders during the fray.

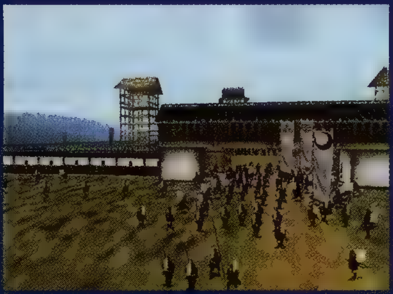
Unfortunately, control does not come easily in *Shogun*. You order formation changes and direct the facing of units with a menu of simple standards like move, attack, or defend. It seems easy enough, and you'll think you've got the hang of it after the tutorial, but in combat it's all a much different matter. The system becomes unwieldy once you realize you've got things happening all over the map; RTS shock can set in.

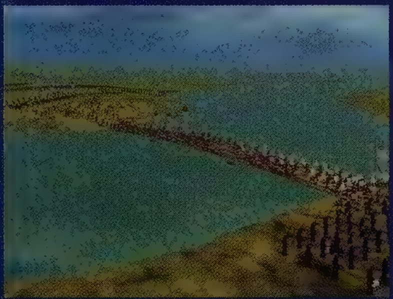
Thankfully, the action usually develops at a realistic "slow" pace and times of confusion are rare. In the meantime, the carnage comes heavy. Dead bodies persist, and their blood will stain the ground until the battle is done. It's creepy and lends an air of horror to the proceedings. It looks like a *war* going on down there.

And it will keep you coming back for more. Multiplay is a dream — up to eight people can join in a game, with four people on each side. (This adds inter-general coordination to your required skill set.) The combination of first-rate battle visuals with the well-balanced tactical/terrain combat system make for a heavily replayable game.

— *Daniel Morris*

CLOSE QUARTERS


Castle sieges are a particularly grim affair. The defender has every advantage, and it's a matter of simply overwhelming the walls.


The worst butchery will come when crossing bridges, where a bottleneck of mayhem develops just about every time.

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Wonderful graphics; solid RTS play; great battles; fantastic setting for turn-based elements.

LOWS: Control difficulties at times; general idea is too derivative of Koei's classics.

BOTTOM LINE: A very satisfying wargame, if not the end-all-beat-all game we'd hoped for.

PC GAMER **84%**

EXCELLENT

CATEGORY Racing		REQUIRED PII 333, 64MB RAM, 200MB hard-drive space
DEVELOPER Rainbow Studios		WE RECOMMEND PIII 450, 128MB RAM, 570MB hard-drive space, wheel or pad
PUBLISHER Microsoft		MAXIMUM PLAYERS 8

Motocross Madness 2

Trade realism for fun and hold onto your handlebars — the Madness from Microsoft is back and lookin' good.

Budding stunt masters will undoubtedly enjoy the new moves and gravity-free air times in the game.

While our console brethren are currently enjoying something of a motocross racing renaissance, dirt-bike offerings on the PC have been scarce. Fortunately, Microsoft has returned with a white-knuckling sequel to its two-year old *Motocross Madness*, and despite the obligatory minor quibbles, the game exceeds its predecessor in every department.

You get to choose from one of seven indoor and outdoor events, including past favorites such as the stadium-based Supercross, the open-ended Stunt Quarry, Baja racing (outdoors with waypoint gates), multiplayer Tag and, of course, Nationals, which is more controlled outdoor track racing.

The two new modes — and arguably the meat and potatoes of *Motocross Madness 2* — are the Enduro and Pro-Circuit races. With the former, imagine the outdoor Baja race, only with dynamic traffic to contend with in settings such as a trailer park, ski resort, jungle, or farmland. Pro-Circuit is the single-player career mode, where you must successfully win races in all of the aforementioned race types and earn prize and sponsorship money to pay for entry fees, bike repairs, new gear/bikes and even medical bills (and once you see the new crash animations, you'll see why you may need a doctor).

Graphically, the game is absolutely stunning, with highly detailed riders, environments and thousands of 3D objects peppered throughout the landscapes. There are cars, spectators, buildings, low-flying airplanes, ski lifts, trees, hay bales, and much more. Resolutions top 1600x1200, and though a 3D accelerator card is not required (as it was with the first game), it's highly recommended. Even more impressive is the fact the framerates don't take much of a hit.

Speaking of "hits," the animations are so lifelike you'll either cringe or laugh your ass off when you see one of your opponents gets squashed by a bus or slammed by a freight train in the Enduro mode.

Regrettably, there are only a small handful of bikes to choose from, from manufacturers like Honda, Yamaha, and KTM and a handful of fictional brands, sporting engines ranging from a modest 125cc to the powerful 600cc. Worse still, I felt very little difference between the bikes, even when I tweaked a few settings in the garage. Other beefs: with the handling, at times I wasn't sure how much the designers were trying to make an arcade game or a simulation. Certainly, 500-foot high jumps and 180-degree turns at more than 100 mph is hardly realistic, but at other times you'll crash far too often by landing a tad off-center, or be thrown out of a Supercross track due to a slight change in rhythm.

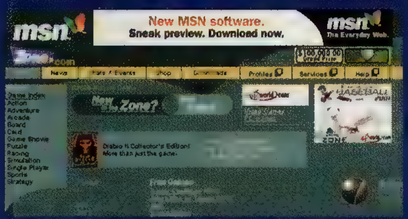
Engine sounds are awesome, but the gameplay could use some music. I felt an emptiness while playing, especially while outdoors enjoying the Stunt Quarry or Enduro modes. Microsoft could've at least given us the option to play our own CDs or import MP3s or WMA files.

The open-ended outdoor environments are massive, at roughly four times the size of the original game.

These relatively minor shortcomings aside, *Motocross Madness 2* is hands down one of the best solo or multiplayer arcade racing offerings of the year thus far.

— *Marc Saltzman*

THE WILD ONES



The MM2 community is alive and kicking on the MSN Gaming Zone (*www.zone.com*) so finding opponents is easy. This time around, Microsoft has implemented team and league play, plus a new ladder competition so online racers can vie for the Top 100 list complete with a personalized license plate indicating your ranking.

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Incredible graphics and animations; varied gameplay and environments; robust online play.

LOWS: Inconsistent handling; no music during gameplay; no track editor as promised.

BOTTOM LINE: With considerable eye candy, depth, and replayability, expect this madness to last.

PC GAMER **87%** EXCELLENT

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HOMEWORLD
CATACLYSM
Cataclysm...Ooh, That's Gotta Hurt
"Homeworld: Cataclysm, the next episode in the Homeworld universe, begins roughly 15 years after the events of the original game. Take command of a new sect with dozens of new ships and technology at your disposal. Lead your fleet through 17 single player missions as you struggle for position in the emerging order – and face the might of a mysterious and powerful new foe." – DailyRadar.com
Daily RADAR .com
HOMEWORLD
CATACLYSM
A new episode in the Homeworld saga
Machine: PC Publisher: Sierra Studios
Genre: Strategy # of Players: 8
Release date: Summer, 2000
Engage in 17 single-player missions or play on-line with up to seven others.
Command the smallest scout ship or your entire Armada in real-time combat for pinpoint control.
Choose unit types, fleet formations and flight tactics for each combat group.
PRIMA'S OFFICIAL STRATEGY GUIDE
HOMEWORLD
CATACLYSM
SAVE 20% on Prima's Official Strategy Guide when you buy the game.
Be The First To Get This Title
by reserving it at Gamestop.com or visiting any of our 550 stores nationwide.
Accessorize!
Maximize your game with the Microsoft Sidewinder Precision USB Joystick and the Annihilator 2 32 Mb Video Card from Creative Labs
Microsoft
SIDEWINDER Precision Pro
CREATIVE
3D BLASTER
ANNIHILATOR PRO
GeForce 256 Powered. 300 MHz Driven. Insane Game Acceleration.
gamestop!com
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Babbage's
software etc

ARCANUM
Of Steamworks & Magick Obscura
Technically Speaking, It Kicks Butt
"Strap the average PC user into the Really Uncomfortable Chair of Truth and then ask him to think about fantasy role-playing games. Nine times out of ten, you'll wind up with some pasty, 1400's mishmash of knights, quill-pen ink on yellowed scrolls, bare chested warriors and pon-cey wizards with pointy hats. Simply put, players can make their own worlds, scenarios, missions and campaigns and do damn near anything – It is looking to be one of the few titles where the word intimidating could possibly be used in a positive sense. Arcanum will pit gamer against gamer in a magic-or-science grudge match that some games have likely been waiting for since those mis-spent D&D lunch hours in sixth grade." – DailyRadar.com
Daily RADAR
ARCANUM
Machine: PC Publisher: Sierra Studios Genre: RPG
# of Players: 1 Release date: 4th Qtr., 2000
Things can heat up pretty fast. Arcanum lets you choose between real-time and turn-based combat.
A mixture of moody 19th-century Victorian with Tolkienesque fantasy.
Out for a stroll, a Gnome finds himself surrounded by Goons.
SAVE 20% ON THE PRIMA STRATEGY GUIDE WITH PURCHASE OF ARCANUM
First In Line or On-Line
Buy newest titles on-line or visit any of our 550 stores nationwide.
Sound
CREATIVE
BLASTER Live! X-GAMER
Take Your Digital Audio to the Gamers Edge!
Experience the realism of pure digital audio with the Soundblaster Live X-gamer Sound Card.
gamestop!com
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software etc

Wizards & Warriors
The Keebler Elves Are Wetting Their Pants
"In an enchanted medieval realm known as the Gael Serran, an evil Pharaoh has overcome a curse and returned to a world unable to defend itself against him. Only the legendary Mavin Sword–a blade forged of twin metals, one cursed by evil, the other blessed by the divine–has the strength to bring his defeat. With the assistance of Kerah, an angel, and Erathsmedor, a dragon, players must engage in a dangerous quest to uncover the legend of the Mavin Sword and bring an end to evil pharaohs diabolical plan. — DailyRadar.com
Daily RADAR .com
Machine: PC Publisher: Activision Genre: RPG
# of Players: 1 Release date: Fall, 2000
Enjoy an engrossing story with rich character development and vivid 3-D environments.
Evolve your character by completing mini-quests in over 120 hours of gameplay.
Cast powerful magic spells using six different spell books with over 100 spells in all.
Microsoft
IntelliEye
IntelliMouse
explorer
Check out Microsoft's revolutionary optical IntelliMouse.
Reserve It Now!
Gamestop.com will hook you up with a reservation for this title or visit us at any of our 550 stores nationwide.
VOODOO 5 5500 PCI
3dfx
Get the full effect with the 3DFX Voodoo5 5500 PCI 64 Mb Video Card
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Babbage's
software etc
Go to www.pcgamer.com/request Product #137

CATEGORY	Space combat	REQUIRED	P266, 32MB RAM, 270MB hard-drive space, Internet connection
DEVELOPER	Microsoft	WE RECOMMEND	PII 333, 16MB 3D accelerator, DirectX-compatible joystick
PUBLISHER	Microsoft	MAXIMUM PLAYERS	420

Allegiance

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Microsoft throws everything but the kitchen sink into this blend of real-time strategy and first-person space combat.

THRUST
FUEL
ARMOR
SHIELD
AMMO
ENERGY
MAP
tankgirl : Cruiser
Current Location:
Oxyl

With more armor and missiles than any other capital ship, the Cruiser isn't something you'll want to tangle with.

If someone asked me to rate *Allegiance* after a single go-round, chances are the score would be nowhere close to what you see at the bottom of this page. But this game is undeniable proof that patience is indeed a virtue. *Allegiance*'s charms are only uncovered after a somewhat daunting learning curve. The reward for perseverance is a multiplayer experience that'll have you itching to head into battle time and time again. Excited yet?

Allegiance is a game of galactic conquest that combines the thrill-of-the-kill intensity of first-person combat with the intricacies of tactical command, the strategic challenges of resource management, and the overriding importance of teamwork. A $9.95 monthly fee (after the first free month) lets you compete in games involving more than 400 players on the MSN Gaming Zone, but there's also an option to host Internet-based games of up to 32 players free of charge (you can also play over a LAN). Besides allowing you to compete in much larger games, the monthly fee provides access to persistent rankings, special events, and other extras.

The purpose of buying in to this space opera is to become a member of one of four factions: the militaristic Iron Coalition; ultra-rich GigaCorps; the genetically enhanced Bios; or the "Belters," a ragtag band whose primary motivations are total autonomy and financial gain. Though the technology trees for each faction operate in a similar fashion, each has its own distinct strengths and weaknesses: the Bios have far surpassed the Iron Coalition and Gigacorps in terms of stealth technology, for instance, but their shields and armor are weaker.

Regardless of your faction, you'll play one of four roles. As Commander, you issue orders to all pilots and send drone ships (miners and builders) to specific destinations. The Investor uses money gleaned from mining and individual pilots' paychecks to invest in new technologies.

Current Location:
MAP

The plethora of information displayed on the HUD can be initially confusing, but you'll soon appreciate just how useful it really is.

Manning the front lines of battle are Pilots; besides battling enemy vessels, they can also lay mines, drop probes, harass enemy miners, and even destroy or take over enemy bases. Players who like it simple can be a turret Gunner in large ships such as bombers and missile frigates.

If you want to immerse yourself in the game's role-playing aspects, there are plenty of ways to do it. But don't think you've got to buy into this stuff to have a good time, because *Allegiance* dishes up so much exciting action that it doesn't matter who you're fighting for — provided you're aware of your faction's capabilities and shortcomings, of course.

There's not enough space here to go into the complexities of even a small-scale *Allegiance* battle, but rest assured it's extremely unlikely that two battles will ever play out the same, except for the fact you'll usually come away from one ready for another session, that is.

Except for the game's rather pathetic documentation — made utterly redundant by the tutorial missions that ship with the game — *Allegiance* is about as good as it gets when it comes to an online multiplayer gaming experience. It definitely takes some time to feel totally at home with this genre-buster, but trust us when we say it's more than worth the effort, especially when you join a squadron and learn to gel as a team. You've got only yourself to blame if you don't take time to check this one out.

— *Stephen Poole*

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Richly complex strategic elements; quality 3D graphics; intense space combat.

LOWS: Steep learning curve; meager documentation; you're gonna need a fast Internet connection.

BOTTOM LINE: Maybe the best team-based multiplayer game since *Team Fortress*.

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE **91%**

CATEGORY	Turn-based strategy	REQUIRED	486/66, 16MB RAM, 20MB hard-drive space
DEVELOPER	John Tiller	WE RECOMMEND	P200, 32MB RAM
PUBLISHER	HPS Simulations	MAXIMUM PLAYERS	2

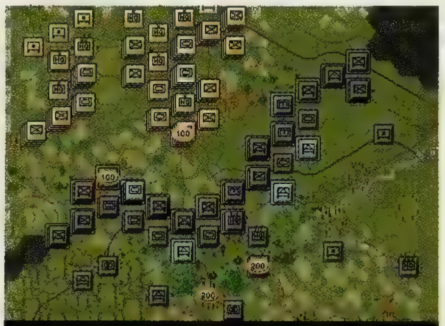
Normandy '44

56 years after D-day, HPS delivers the ultimate simulation of Eisenhower's "Great Crusade."

The full, 750-turn, campaign game is awesome
CAPT. MILLER
PVT. RYAN

John Tiller's *Normandy '44* is the second volume of HPS's splendid Panzer Campaigns series, and it will warm the hearts of grognards everywhere. Every segment of the Normandy campaign is given its due. From the chaotic slaughter on Omaha Beach to Montgomery's elephantine assaults on Caen, from the bitter stalemate in the hedgerows to the siege of Cherbourg, it's all here. And I do mean "all" — including a 750-turn monster that covers every hour between June 6 and August 19. Even Tiller admits it's "virtually unplayable," but, like Mt. Everest, it is there if you want to dedicate a significant portion of your adult life to playing it.

Wargamers seeking fast-paced, cut and thrust Panzer action would be well-advised to stick to *Smolensk '41*, because the Normandy campaign was a grinding, agonizingly slow slugfest of pure attrition, and the game faithfully reflects that quality. Even the smaller scenarios (10 turns or so) require patience and a lot of tactical micro-management.


Small scenarios can be played in a few hours. Montgomery tries to seize the bridges over the Seine.

Unit-scale is purely tactical: platoon, company, and individual batteries. You will quickly notice that casualty figures for most firefights seem remarkably small compared to the amount of firepower involved. As Tiller points out in his design notes, however, this too is a matter of realistic scale. If a platoon loses an average of one man every hour, its combat effectiveness vanishes after a day or two. And in the claustrophobic, seemingly endless bocage fighting, fatigue and disruption burned out units at a terrible rate (more than 100 American company commanders were relieved of duty in June alone because they simply could not order their men into the meat grinder one more time). The game takes into account this brutal reality: any player who pushes his units without ample time for rest and refit will pay a heavy price.

There are a lot of nice creative touches "under the hood." For example, artillery units that have lots of ammo and good communications are designated as being "stockpiled" and have a commensurately higher rating. Tactical air support is nicely integrated into the overall balance, and field fortifications are very effective force multipliers for the Germans. In addition to the historical scenarios, Tiller also includes several hypothetical variations on "The Rommel Option." Rommel wanted to keep powerful armor close to the beaches for rapid counterattacks; Hitler overruled him. By following Rommel's strategy, the German player actually can drive the Allies back into the sea.

Production values throughout are first-rate; so is the online manual. HPS has even included a separate folder so that roll-your-own designers can print out all the maps. Now that's service. *Normandy '44* belongs in the library of every gamer who's interested in this campaign. You can order it from *www.hpssims.com*.

— *William R. Trotter*

OUR LEAST FAVORITE NAZIS

MARTIN BOORMAN, Hitler's right-hand man, was so unremittingly evil that people kept searching for him for years after his death in 1945.

JOSEF MENGELE was the grotesque mastermind behind the Nazis' medical experiments. This so-called "man of science" was a right bastard.

WILHELM KLINK harassed and bothered captured U.S. servicemen for years. His legacy of weirdly funny cruelty is unsurpassed.

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: It's so good, so big, and so solid that nobody ever needs to design another game about the subject.

LOWS: Definitely a hardcore product — not for the novice; alpine learning curve.

BOTTOM LINE: This is as close to "definitive" as a historical simulation can get.

PC GAMER 86% EXCELLENT

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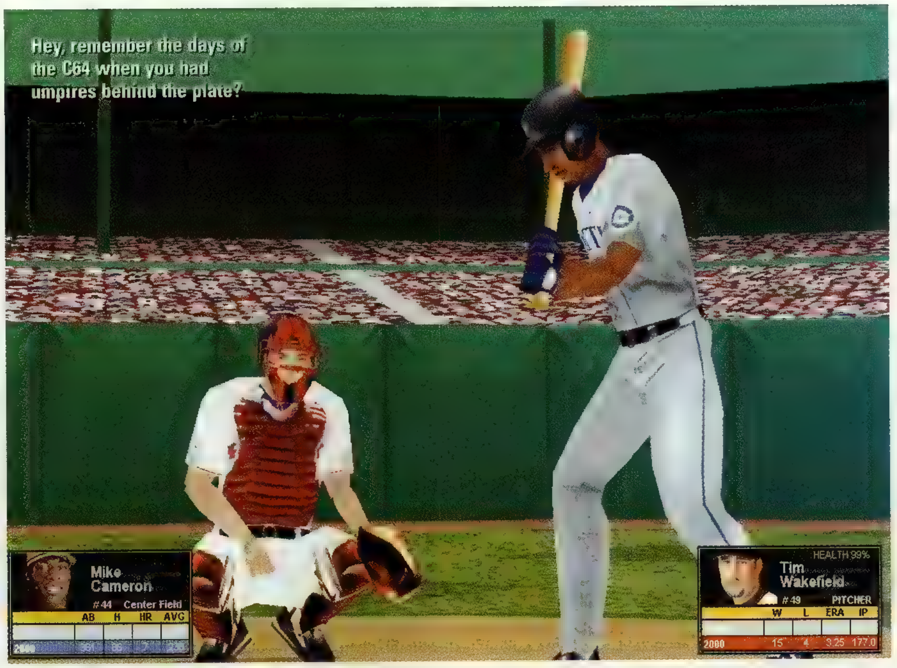
PC GAMER

The World's Best-Selling PC Games Magazine

CATEGORY	Sports	REQUIRED	P166, 32MB RAM, 100MB hard-drive space
DEVELOPER	Microsoft	WE RECOMMEND	PII 300, 64MB RAM, 3D accelerator card
PUBLISHER	Microsoft	MAXIMUM PLAYERS	2

Microsoft Baseball 2001

This series just keeps getting worse, despite this year's addition of the excellent *Baseball Mogul* engine.



Hey, remember the days of the C64 when you had umpires behind the plate?

Last year, Microsoft released a somewhat decent baseball game for the arcade crowd (we gave it a 59 percent in the *PCG* Aug. 1999 issue). When critics knocked the lack of a general manager mode or Internet play, Microsoft explained that they were planning to have a three-year cycle for their franchise and that GM play would come this year.

Rather than reinvent the wheel, Microsoft licensed the very good stat sim *Baseball Mogul* engine and incorporated it into their arcade game, calling it *Microsoft Baseball 2001*. Unfortunately, unlike that great combination of peanut butter and chocolate, these are not two great tastes that taste great together; instead it feels like you're eating peanut butter blended with shards of glass.

The on-field gameplay is best described as boring. The pitcher-batter interface requires no more thought than "move the crosshairs into the target circle and swing." Unlike office favorite *High Heat Baseball*, you cannot tell if you are being thrown a curveball or a fastball — all pitches look the same. But even if they did look different, you're so busy concentrating on lining up your targeting reticule that you don't have time to tell what pitch is coming. When you connect, the animation of the ball hitting the bat does not look right at all; sometimes there doesn't seem to be any connection.

IT COULD BE WORSE...

If you think *Microsoft Baseball 2001* is bad, then you probably won't like this one either:

John Rocker's All-White Baseball 2001

Key features:

- Making racist comments
- Threatening reporters
- Crowd-baiting
- Lowbrow name-calling
- Battery-dodging

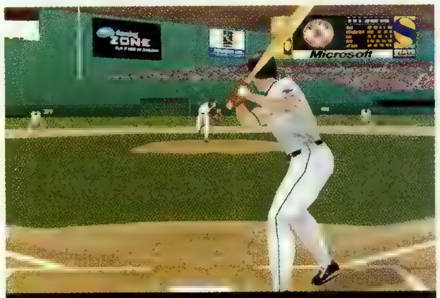
As with last year, the ball is a miniscule dot on the screen — it's difficult to locate and makes fielding an adventure. The players seem to have trouble with the ball as well, because I have never seen so many throwing errors in one nine-inning game. Realism simply doesn't play a role; you don't have to warm up pitchers, or worry about any wind.

The only good feature of *MS Baseball* is the management portion. Stats are kept close to real life, and the GM option of controlling revenues and keeping your team under the salary cap can be fun. However, you can't play the game in manage-only mode — you've gotta suffer through the action part.

The player models are very good, but the stadiums need more detail and umpires are absent once again. The ball physics are impressive, especially when the ball bounces around the Bermuda Triangle at Fenway Park (you never know what direction the ball will take over there), but it doesn't rescue the overall lifeless gameplay.

Finally, *MS Baseball*'s sound is horrendous; the one-man play-by-play stutters from time to time and is about as thrilling as listening to a computer give you bank account balances.

If you like to play GM, I would stick with the original *Baseball Mogul* so you can avoid the action mode altogether. If you prefer arcade-type baseball games, I would pick *Triple Play 2001* over this one any day



Quick! Guide your "+" into the circle in order to hit the ball. It's just like real baseball (ahem).

(and that's not a recommendation of EA's disappointing option). Of course, if you're looking for the total package, go buy *Sammy Sosa High Heat Baseball 2001*. Microsoft's second effort isn't even worthy of a place on the bench.

— *Dan Clarke*

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Microsoft was smart to get the *Baseball Mogul* technology — it is a good stats engine.

LOWS: Boring gameplay; stuttering sound; tiny manual; no 'net play; awful pitcher-batter interface.

BOTTOM LINE: Any baseball game is better than this. With *Sammy Sosa* out there, why play anything else?

PC GAMER **41%** TOLERABLE

CATEGORY	Sports	**REQUIRED**	P166, 32MB RAM, 100MB hard-drive space
DEVELOPER	Headgate Studios	**WE RECOMMEND**	PII 300, 64MB RAM, extra drive for downloading courses
PUBLISHER	Sierra Sports	**MAXIMUM PLAYERS**	4

PGA Championship 2000

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Some good improvements on last year's great PGA game land this follow-up safely on the green.

player Rob Smolka
+2
hole 3 par
stroke

Internet design legend Brian Silvernail contributed Canaveral Dunes, one of 13 courses that ship with the game.

Unlike most of the other sports, golf games on the PC are still abundant. In fact, you might say that we're in a Golden Age of golfing sims, with a fierce battle being waged among some truly impressive contenders.

Ignoring EA Sports' disappointing Tiger Woods series, virtual golfers are blessed with three outstanding choices: the now-homeless *Jack Nicklaus Golden Bear Challenge* (Activision won't be publishing a sequel due to poor sales), *Links 2000* (still a fine game despite little change from the 1999 version, but hang on to your clubs for *Links 2001*), and last but by no means least, *PGA Championship Golf 2000*, the latest and greatest from Vance Cook and his team of golfing nuts at Headgate Studios.

If you've had the pleasure of playing last year's version (which received an Editors' Choice award from yours truly in the September 1999 issue), you'll feel right at home with *PGA 2000*. Everything that was good about last year's game — the real-time mouse swing interface, realistic physics, powerful course editor, and seamless online play — have all been improved.

Mastering the TrueSwing now requires you to develop a good tempo throughout the shot. The new method feels much more natural, and is actually easier to control once you've breached the learning curve. The already impressive physics model captures ball flight and bounce better than ever. A small but very noticeable added touch is the way the ball rolls — you can actually see it revolving as it rolls across the green. It may not have an impact on play, but you'll be amazed at how much it enhances the realism.

The course architect has been beefed up with more objects to use in your designs, and you can easily import any course made for the prior game. Despite Headgate's claim that it has made the editor simpler to work with, I'll continue to let the pros on the 'net continue to weave their magic; I don't think I'll ever figure this thing out.

options
STYLE EDITOR
hat
hair
face
top
bottom
trim
shoes

You get more clothing choices this year, but even when trying to look conservative, you still come off looking like a pimp with bad fashion sense.

The one glaring deficiency from last year — a slapped-together offline tournament mode — has undergone the biggest change, and is now a strong feature. Using any of the courses you have on your hard disk, you can set up tournaments of varying rounds, purses, rules for making the cut, and much more. It's simple to set up, and you can keep track of your statistics and earnings as you progress from season to season. It's not a true career mode (i.e. you don't age) but it works well enough. Let's hope that next year's version fleshes this out further.

One of the few complaints I have is an occasional problem with collision detection. Sometimes you'll hit a tree and the ball will ricochet off of it at an unnatural angle. I've also seen a couple of instances where my ball was right up against an obstacle and I was able to hit through it like it wasn't there. The announcers — poor in last year's game — have improved, but only marginally. They still repeat themselves too often, and give away the shot result before the ball comes to a halt.

Neither of the small gripes should dissuade you from picking up *PGA Championship Golf 2000*, though. It does everything a good golf game should, and the TrueSwing shot method is a refreshing way to play a round.

— *Rob Smolka*

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Improved in nearly every area over last year's excellent game.

LOWS: Occasionally odd collision detection; announcers can spoil the suspense.

BOTTOM LINE: Even if you're a Nicklaus or Links fan, *PGA 2000*'s swing method makes it a must buy.

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE **91%**

CATEGORY	Action	REQUIRED	P200, 32MB RAM, 380MB hard-drive space
DEVELOPER	Refraction Games	WE RECOMMEND	PII 300, 64MB RAM, Direct3D-compatible 3D accelerator
PUBLISHER	Talonsoft	MAXIMUM PLAYERS	16

Codename Eagle

What do we hate more than the Dallas Cowboys? When we see a game with a great idea, but crap-tastic gameplay.

You're going down. Die like an aviator.

Guaranteed ways to piss me off: Kick a dog. Blow off a friendly little kid. Sit in my living room and root for the Dallas Cowboys. And come up with a decent concept for a game, then botch the execution badly.

Codename Eagle pisses me off, and it never mentioned the Cowboys once. Conceptually, this 3D action offering from Talonsoft could've gone somewhere. It's one of those alternate-universe scenarios that so many designers love: in this one, one of Czar Nicholas's sons survives to take over Russia, and boy, does he have a chip on his shoulder. The new Czar Pietre is blasting across Europe with revenge on his mind.

You're a British commando leading a team in James Bond-ian derring-do through a dozen missions across land, sea, and air. The overall goal is to take out his key facilities. Within that framework, the missions are coherent, challenging, and very well thought through.

Sounds fun enough. So where did this go wrong? Let me count the ways. Let's start with all those mission objectives that tell you that stealth is the best idea. Yeah, right. In reality, you're going to end up shooting anyone and anything that reacts in a hostile manner. That's because you have no way of knowing what help you'll have in meeting "stealthy" objectives. There are plenty of pick-ups, but just try figuring out what any of them are supposed to do; it would help if you could examine your inventory items, but *Codename Eagle* wasn't built for that.

This old drunk is the first guy you have to talk to. Ahh, why don't you just shoot him instead.

Characters look silly; blocky graphics rule *Codename Eagle* across the board, from the people to the terrain. And you'll just love having to kick out of your game to save. C'mon, guys, this is 2000 A.D. — you couldn't figure out how to put quick-save on the keyboard? That's just poor.

The addition of vehicle play adds something to what would otherwise be a poor FPS…once you master the controls. That's not easy — getting a handle on the trucks and boats is no simple matter, and flying the biplane is downright difficult (ridiculously so without a joystick). Even a tap on the controls sends your plane careening around, and maintaining altitude is quite tough to accomplish. Should you get these down, though, the vehicles open up a vista of multiplay options, either via network or through GameSpy. You're not going to want to abandon *Unreal Tournament* or *Quake III* for this, mind you, but it does have its fans and offers a different twist on the genre. (If you do want to multiplay, you'll want to download the 1.33 patch, which adds a bunch of maps to the meager initial offering of four.)

Even with its multiplayer mode, *Codename Eagle* stands as an overall disappointment. The impediments to smooth gameplay suck the fun out of the game, and there's just too much else available in this genre to spend your time and money slogging through it. It's a shame, as the chance to once again eradicate Czarist Russia could have been a grand time.

—Don St. John

This guy was blazing away at you, but it didn't seem to do him much good.

FINAL VERDICT

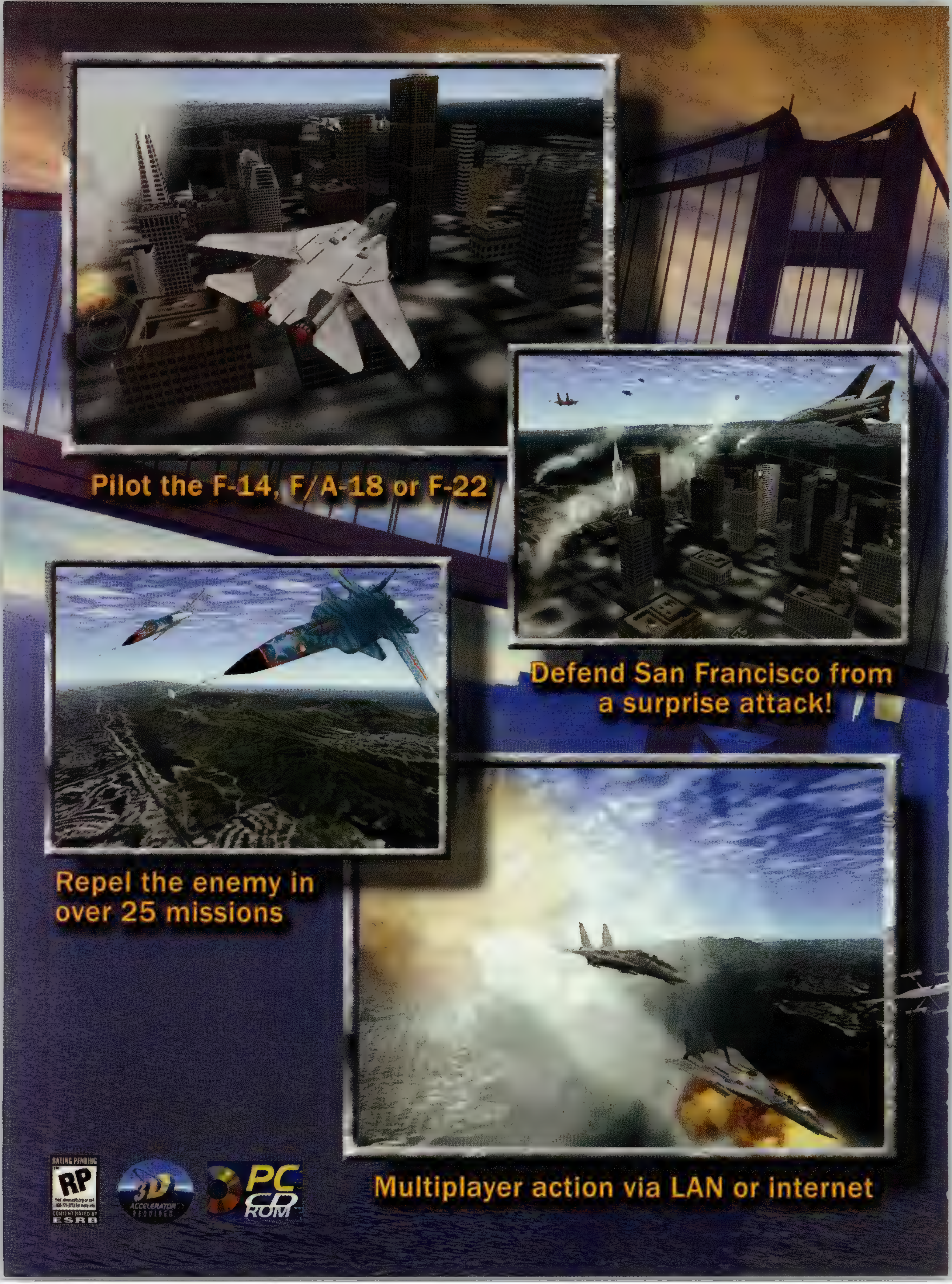
HIGHS: A decent, story-driven concept; reasonable fun in multiplay.

LOWS: Blocky graphics; lack of good mission info; ridiculous save scheme; general pain in the butt.

BOTTOM LINE: It's a cool idea, but poor execution and muddled thinking add up to a lack of fun.

PC GAMER **52%**

MERELY OKAY


Pilot the F-14, F/A-18 or F-22
Defend San Francisco from a surprise attack!
Repel the enemy in over 25 missions
Multiplayer action via LAN or internet
RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
3D
ACCELERATOR
REQUIRED
PC
CD
ROM

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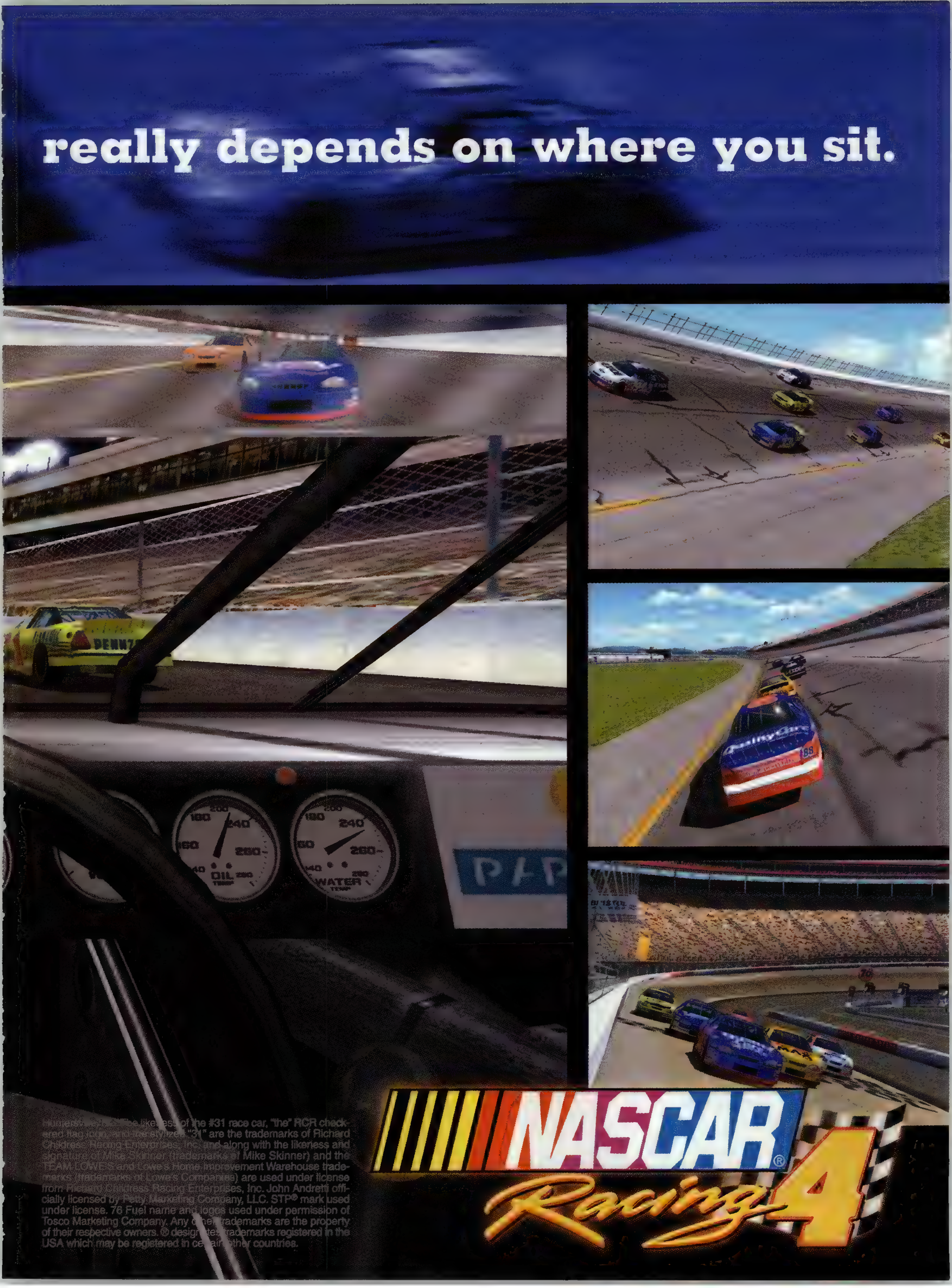
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WATER
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Racing 4
Richard
along with the likeness and
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CATEGORY	Puzzle	REQUIRED	P166; 64MB RAM, 500MB hard drive space; 3D accelerator
DEVELOPER	Psygnosis	WE RECOMMEND	PII 233; 64MB RAM; 8MB 3D accelerator
PUBLISHER	Take 2 Interactive	MULTIPLAYER OPTIONS	None

Lemmings Revolution

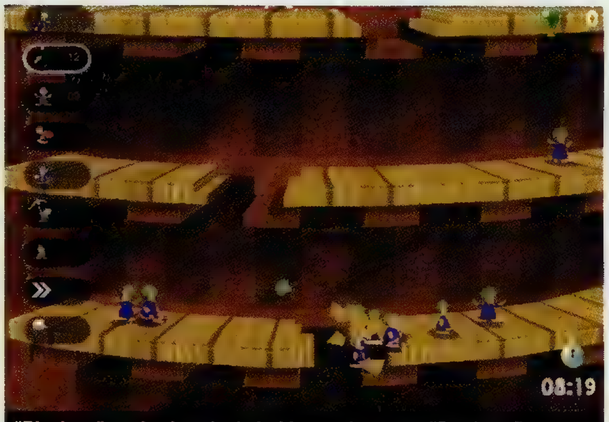
We'd follow this fantastic series off any cliff, even though there are a few problems with this title.

Certain games transcend the usual superlatives. These are the games that hold us spellbound when we play, entice us when we aren't playing, and live on in our memories as reasons why we got into this whole gaming thing in the first place. For countless veteran gamers, myself included, 1991's absurdly addictive *Lemmings* was just that type of game.

Conceptually simple yet unapologetically brain-draining, *Lemmings* asked us to save entire flocks of the dimwitted furballs from the imaginative perils developer Psygnosis had concocted for them. From our scrolling third-person perspective, we made our lemmings dig tunnels, carve craters, build little staircases, and literally climb the walls in an effort to keep them from the catapults, whirring sawblades, and evaporating bridges that lay in wait. Violent? No. The game remained inherently "cute" despite countless instances of grievous bodily harm.

Revolution signals a return to the follow-the-leader formula and presentation that kept us so mesmerized a decade ago. Gone are the gun-toting lemmings, first-person views and convoluted schemes of *Lemmings Paintball* and *Lemmings 3D*. And fans of the original and anyone who prefers cranial, mouse-controlled stimulation to high-velocity, high-twitch joystick jiggling will eat it up.

In typical style, *Revolution* starts incredibly easy, and then develops quickly into a succession of astoundingly difficult challenges that has you fighting the clock, designing and redesigning strategies, and assigning attributes in rapid-fire fashion. It'll have you muttering secret curses too, all the time wondering how Psygnosis was able to come up with more than 100 intricate and continually fresh levels, multiple solutions for each, and a honeycombed progression ladder that offers several different routes to the game's eventual conclusion.



"Blockers" are back to do their thing again, as are "Bombers."

Revolution does offer several newfangled twists on the 1991 product. Now the action unfolds on the exterior wall of a huge upended cylinder, thus lending an air of 3D gameplay. And because something horrible could be happening on one side of the cylinder while you're busy taking care of business on the other side, you'll be thankful indeed for the user-operated 360-degree pivoting camera. Other innovations include a single-step zoom and a pause feature that lets you change a miner into a basher and scope out the situation without losing time off the clock.

With more hazards (water, lava, acid and timed doors are just a few), switches, speed-up pads, anti-gravity pads, teleporters and animated enemies than ever, the action has never been more frantic. It's a good thing then that lemmings now come in three flavors — normal, water-walking and acid-impervious — though they remain confined to the same eight skills they've had since 1991.

Sadly, *Revolution*'s biggest flaw is quite serious — the boxed game refuses to recognize the keyboard if either it or your mouse is USB! Take 2 is aware of the problem, yet that (and the noticeable lack of settings options) do reflect poorly on prerelease testing. And even though the return to *Lemmings* basics is generally a good thing, one wonders why so little of the capabilities of today's advanced and accelerated video technology was left unexplored, and how come the classic music and sound effects of the original were ignored in favor of these instantly forgettable effects.

Nevertheless, *Lemmings Revolution* is the finest *Lemmings* outing in some time. It's a throwback, and a good throwback.

— *Gordon Goble*

Two groups of the cute little fuzzheads must assist each other and make their escape aboard hot air balloons.

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Tons of levels; lots of alternate routes and solutions; a welcome return to basics.

LOWS: Graphics are far from state-of-the-art; user options are virtually non-existent; USB bug.

BOTTOM LINE: Not the hottest thing on the market, but Lemmings haven't been this fun in a decade.

PC GAMER **74%** GOOD

CATEGORY Strategy	REQUIRED P200, 16MB RAM, 300MB hard-drive space
DEVELOPER Krisalis	WE RECOMMEND PII 400, 64MB RAM, 3Dfx accelerator card
PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive	MULTIPLAYER OPTIONS 4

Airport Tycoon

Terrible documentation and lousy graphics can almost kill a great simulation... but not quite.

Flight contract
China Northern
Airline
China Northern
Flight
Flight CN193 departs for Seoul at 14:30, arriving back at 19:35
Runway
1
Aircraft type
Vikkers Viscount
Revenue
n/a
Flight No.
Time
Arrival
CN192
19:35
Departure
CN193
14:30
Contract expires
4/Jan/1990 16:20
Master contract expires
7/Jan/1992 12:15
Check out any single flight arrival or departure on these sharp display screens.

As Dickens might have written, "It was the best of sims, it was the worst of sims." It's true of *Airport Tycoon*, a new airport construction and operating simulation. Parts of this game are great; others will thrust you into the throes of despair. But just when it's looking bleakest, a new customization feature pops up to keep you playing.

There's a lot of breadth to this game. You can place your airport in any of seventy-five real cities on six continents, each displaying their own weather and terrain conditions, cargo and passenger needs. Buy land, and consider taking out an option to expand at a future date. Build your terminal from scratch, or go for prefabs. Negotiate contracts with several hundred airlines and service suppliers. Add cargo areas, control towers, and taxi services. Zoom down to your terminal or runways, and watch them in 3D realtime. And on, and on....

Breadth, yes; but depth, too. Not only do you get to build a large variety of terminals, support and navigation structures, transportation, storage and emergency facilities, but also you choose among many differing quality levels and costs for each; and if you're terminally anal-retentive, you can completely design the interior of a terminal, from bathrooms to concession stands.

Airport Tycoon's graphics are at their best in the animated, classy menus where time is paused, and you make important decisions involving contracts, runway slot negotiations and construction purchases. By contrast, the real-time 3D engine used to display both terminal interiors and airport exteriors is primitive, using poor textures, and (worst of all) almost no animation. It displays objects you've placed in the 3D field, but doesn't examine any other part of the game for information. As a result, the occasional taxi or plane arrival/departure is both unrealistic and disappointing by the time you've built a thriving, world-class airport.

But most of the difficulties you'll face in *Airport Tycoon* derive less from inadequate graphics than from cultural shock. Face it: by European standards, American gamers are pampered. Europeans are used to deliberately vague and flimsy documentation, and barebones in-game help systems.

These are precisely the elements that raise our red, white and blue hackles — and European-born *Airport Tycoon* provides them all in spades. Ironically, I'm convinced that if developers Krisalis had made product adjustments expected for American markets, they could have sold *Airport Tycoon* like cheap weekend holiday flights. As it is, they didn't even bother changing the game's foreign title when it entered Ellis Island. The box says *Airport Tycoon*, but *AirMogul*, the UK title, appears throughout the software.

Airport Tycoon's depth and sim engine are excellent. I can live with the serviceable graphics; but the learning curve is much steeper than it should be, and the game is unforgiving of mistakes. Sim rookies should steer clear of the title, but veterans will find it a highly entertaining if bumpy ride.

— *Barry Brenesal*

Where are all the people? We don't know!

GET OFF THE GROUND

All that money, and no idea what to build? Start off with a prefab passenger terminal, and a control tower. As you increase the number of gates and planes, you'll want to build taxiways and additional runways. Next, add plane maintenance buildings for refueling, baggage trolleys, etc. — and don't forget aprons.

Want happier passengers? Add trees and statues; and build an infirmary. Want a safer airport? Need more income? Add taxi zones, and slap a surcharge on 'em.

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Plenty of things to do and ways to do it; endless replayability; excellent simulation engine.

LOWS: Primitive 3D engine; steep learning curve; awful documentation.

BOTTOM LINE: This airport sim offers lots of options and depth of play, but it's for sim veterans only.

PC GAMER 62%
ABOVE AVERAGE

CATEGORY Adventure	REQUIRED PII 266, 32MB RAM, 450MB hard-drive space, 3D accelerator card
DEVELOPER Creative Reality	WE RECOMMEND PII 450, 64MB RAM
PUBLISHER Talonsoft	MULTIPLAYER OPTIONS None

Martian Gothic: Unification

Taking a stab at *Resident Evil*-style scares on the PC isn't as easy as it seems, as this game proves.

It's actually surprising how little effort was put into trying to duplicate the successful console "survival horror" genre for the PC. *Martian Gothic: Unification* is best described as "*Resident Evil* on Mars." It draws enormous inspiration from its console forebears. This includes giving you a haunted locale filled with zombies and monsters (in this case, at the Vita-1 base on Mars), a third-person perspective with fixed "spooky" camera angles, and a conspiracy that gets gradually unraveled through the discovery of notes and voice logs left by the departed crew.

Since the game nails many fundamental design ideals and even manages a few new twists on the genre, its bad controls and poor presentation become all the more glaring and infuriating.

One of the interesting new twists is controlling three characters. These astronauts are coming to investigate the destruction of the Martian base and its last cryptic communication, "Stay alone...stay alive." As a precaution against the disease that seems to have wiped out the base crew, you have to make sure that none of your three characters are in contact with each other — a neat quarantine gimmick that adds to the chill factor.

This makes for some very interesting gameplay, as your characters have to work together and send items back and forth to solve certain puzzles without ever being in the same location. Unfortunately, this cool dynamic, crying out for original puzzle creativity, devolves into "find key A, send through vacuum tube to other team member to open door B."

The base crew, of course, isn't quite dead. They've been re-animated as flesh-eating zombies.

She looks unhappy; she's probably wishing that she was in *Resident Evil*.

Just as the tempo is rising, though, the game hamstrings itself with horrendous control. The keyboard combat controls are awkward enough to be mostly useless, and for a game that takes a console title as inspiration, having no options for gamepad or joystick control is a major mistake. In addition, your inability to permanently stop or even temporarily slow down the zombies frequently leads to situations where you're repeatedly trying to open a door while fending off a zombie, only to have the door close by the time you've taken care of the zombie.

This infuriating quirk turns their attacks — potential moments of pure terror — into mere annoyances as they happen again and again. I sometimes had to re-load a scene six or eight times before figuring out the sequence of steps that would get me through a room while dodging the creatures. Coupled with the completely frustrating console-style save-game scheme (you can't save anywhere, meaning you have to repeat some sections several times), much of the game's innovation is overshadowed by its poor design.

The 640x480-resolution graphics are a sure sign that it was developed for PC and console simultaneously. However, the game's artwork features some haunting 2D interiors. The storyline is good and the dialogue, sound, and music are all excellent. The music is unobtrusive and works to set the mood. The musical "shrieks" that accompany a zombie jumping on your neck deserve special mention as the scariest element in the game.

It's too bad that for a "survival horror" game, *Martian Gothic*'s scares are so few and far between. The zombies are so ubiquitous that they're more of a hassle than a horror. Nothing in the game even comes close to the "zombie looking over the shoulder" scene that made the first *Resident Evil* an instant classic.

That doesn't mean that *Martian Gothic* is a bad game — it just shoots for the stars and burns up in the atmosphere.

— *Allan Rausch*

Expect many a flesh-ripping obstacle.

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Intriguing storyline; atmospheric music; and good voice-acting.

LOWS: Bad controls; annoying zombies; console-style save-game and inventory system.

BOTTOM LINE: A stylish, competent *Resident Evil* clone that lacks the scares and polish of its inspiration.

PC GAMER 71% GOOD

CATEGORY Flight Sim	**REQUIRED** P200, 32MB RAM, 350MB hard-drive space, 3D video card	
DEVELOPER Terminal Reality	**WE RECOMMEND** PIII 450, 128MB RAM, 1.6GB hard-drive space, joystick	
PUBLISHER G.O.D.	**MAXIMUM PLAYERS** 4	

Fly! 2K

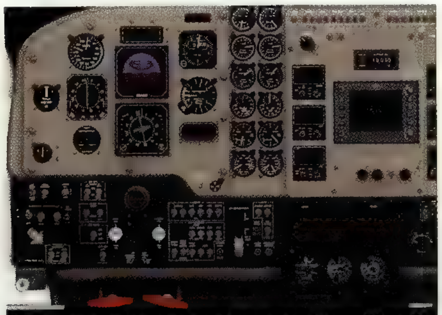
This isn't really a "sequel"—let's just call it an enormous bug-fix for a flawed but promising flight sim.

Although a large part of *Fly! 2K*'s world is flat and featureless, there are some attractive mountainous areas if you look hard enough.

When Terminal Reality and Gathering of Developers released their ambitious general aviation sim *Fly!* in 1999, the title met with mixed reviews. There was praise for the game's unparalleled level of avionics and cockpit fidelity, and criticism for its featureless terrain graphics and lengthy list of bugs.

TRI and G.O.D. made a public commitment to continue supporting the product until it lived up to its full potential and, with *Fly! 2K*, they have remained true to their word. Available as a free download for gamers who purchased the original title and retailing for less than $30 for those that didn't, *Fly! 2K* is a clear improvement on its parent game — but unfortunately it still contains a few built-in design flaws.

Those familiar with the original *Fly!* are aware of the remarkable level of detail that has been coded into this high-end civilian flight sim. Five different aircraft — the Cessna 172R, Piper Malibu Mirage, Beechcraft King Air, Piper Navajo Chieftain, and Hawker 800XP business jet — have been painstakingly reproduced, and each plane boasts some of the most accurate flight dynamics ever to find their way into a commercial sim. Even more impressive is the stunningly precise instrumentation and avionics modeling for each aircraft. Every single gauge, dial, and switch that exists on the actual plane has been reproduced with remarkable accuracy. Even the list of bug fixes for this update is long and encouraging.



An automated engine start-up procedure will walk you through each and every switch setting.

One other fix that has been applied to the new release is an elevation patch that attempts to improve on the original game's often flat-as-a-board terrain graphics. *Fly! 2K* contains an impressive 13,500 runways in 9,500 cities around the world, but many of these are just featureless rectangles set against some equally flat and colorless scenery tiles. Once you leave the enhanced scenery areas around *Fly! 2K*'s five featured American cities, the topography still pales in comparison to Microsoft's *Flight Sim 2000* or EA's *Flight Unlimited III*.

Its healthy bug fixes aside, the chief selling point to *Fly! 2K* probably lies in its bundled collection of third-party utilities and add-ons. The sim now comes with built-in support for Roger Wilco online voice communication, some gorgeous cloud and thunderstorm effects from How In The World's Sky! program, and downloadable real-world weather courtesy of Infometar. Collectively, these additions do a great job of enhancing the sim's already impressive volumetric clouds and Internet connectivity, but they fall a little short at repairing what is essentially still a problematic flight sim.

The original *Fly!* was quite prone to ongoing fatal errors and system crashes and unfortunately not a great deal has changed with the *2K* version. I found myself suffering through sporadic crash-to-desktop bugs while playing the game, albeit a little less frequently than with the first release. Damage modeling still remains totally nonexistent — meaning that you can bounce your aircraft off the hard deck with

Fuel and passenger loadouts are fully configurable.

complete impunity — and there's still an unforgivable absence of any tutorials or similar teaching aids.

Although clearly in a class by itself in the instrumentation and flight dynamics department, *Fly! 2K* is still a few nautical miles shy of fulfilling its potential as the new ultra civilian flight sim.

— *Andy Mahood*

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: The best airplane cockpits on the market; excellent flight model; numerous bug fixes.

LOWS: Unimpressive terrain graphics; no damage modeling; lock-ups and system crashes; no tutorials.

BOTTOM LINE: Although significantly improved, it's still not the complete sim that it could be.

PC GAMER **63%**
ABOVE AVERAGE

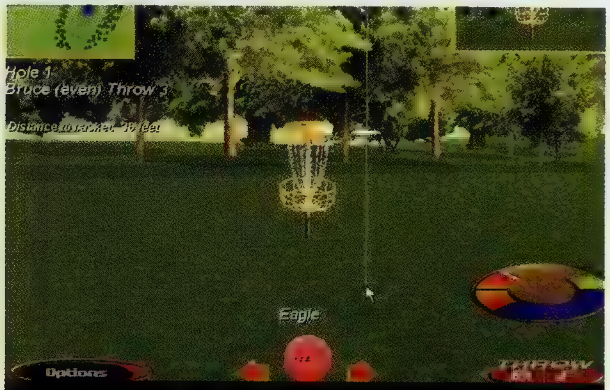
CATEGORY	Pointless	REQUIRED	P233, 32MB RAM, 40MB hard-drive space
DEVELOPER	Sundial Interactive	WE RECOMMEND	Having the inability to distinguish a good game from a bad one
PUBLISHER	Wizardworks	MAXIMUM PLAYERS	1

Innova Disc Golf

All right, everyone — take one look at the title of this game, and repeat along with me: What the hell?

Man, you know this industry's going to pot when the budget software market starts publishing stuff based on freaking Frisbee golf. According to the manual, disc golf is one of the "fastest growing new sports in America," and this interactive version is "intended as an introduction to the game." This is, of course, intended for all of you who can't quite grasp the subtle nuances of whipping a Frisbee at a target on a standard golf course.

From the title screen, you can start a single match, or begin a pro season of red-hot, sexy disc golf action. Four courses are available, and you can choose the amount of wind on the course. After a surprisingly lengthy initialization process, you'll pop onto the course, viewing the action from a first-person perspective. At this point, prepare yourself to whip those discs as you take in lush, static graphics that would be the rival of *Links 386 Pro*. You can throw your Frisb — er, I mean, discs either forehand or backhand, and choose your chucking angle at the bottom-right of the screen.



Your mission is to place the disc into the basket. It doesn't get much lonelier than one-man disc golf, tell you what.

If you haven't guessed by now, *Disc Golf* is essentially a crappy golf game that uses Frisbees instead of golf balls. The only thing that makes the game worth playing — but only once — is the amazingly bad commentary that was undoubtedly recorded in the programmer's bathroom. For example, if you overshoot your mark, you'll hear: "Nice shot...gorilla boy!" Ouch!

It's a tragic state of affairs when I have more fun rearranging the game's .wav files so the commentators said perverted things to each other than actually playing the game. If you are a maniac who lives for the radical thrills of Frisbee golf and need a computer-based version, this is your game. Everyone else should just chortle at the box and move on to the next bin of bargain-basement tripe.

— *Colin Williamson*

FINAL VERDICT
PC GAMER 19%
DON'T BOTHER

CATEGORY	Racing	REQUIRED	P233, 32MB RAM, 120MB hard-drive space, 3D accelerator card
DEVELOPER	Synetic	WE RECOMMEND	PII 300, 64MB RAM
PUBLISHER	Southpeak	MAXIMUM PLAYERS	8

BreakNeck

BreakNeck is a new arcade-style racing game in a market full of arcade-style racing games. The only special niche it fills is the temporary absence of arcade-style racing games where you can shoot stuff. Maybe they expect a bunch of disgruntled *I-82* or *Redline* fans to step up and buy their game. Whatever the case, *BreakNeck* offers both single and multi-player Arcade or Expert racing modes. A fairly deep career mode is available too, should you be so inclined. There is also a "shoot each other with weapons" mode. All these game styles take place on well-rendered and surprisingly innovative race tracks, with a hyped-up sense of speed. Really, the game goes too fast — but you may find yourself cracking an involuntary smile as you breeze around turns, through a tunnel, and over a hill with physics-devoid abandon. The damage model is nifty too, particularly the way a messed-up ride feels when using force feedback.

My basic problem with this game is that it's just another example of "me-too" development and publishing. It's not that there's anything terribly wrong with the notion of a new 3D action racer. But seriously, how many variations (or tacit non-variations) of this type of game do we need to play before someone actually takes the time and imagination to cook up an intriguing new twist on it?

Anything would suffice: a cool new arrangement of good guys versus bad guys; a clever re-thinking of weapons and damage; an inspiring new setting. None of these things seem too difficult to incorporate, but *BreakNeck* doesn't even make an attempt.

People who are into thoughtful simulation racing games won't really get anything out of this, and *Need for Speed* more than adequately caters to the "arcade style with realism" crowd. But for people who ask nothing more of a computer game than they be allowed to tear ass around a track and take shots at their buddies, *BreakNeck* gets the job done. It's hardly top-drawer game design, but not every game can be.

— *Andrew S. Bub*

Night-time driving can provide a few fun thrills and spills.

FINAL VERDICT
PC GAMER 53%
MERELY OKAY

PLAY WITH US
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Who said a quality PC controller had to cost one million dollars and look like the next guy's? For instance, InterAct's Hammerhead FX is a professional quality PC controller with a fresh look, countless features and a price that won't have you living on ramen noodles and mayonnaise-bacon-bit sandwiches.
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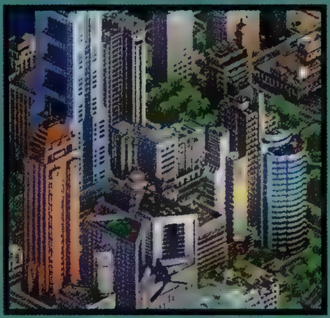
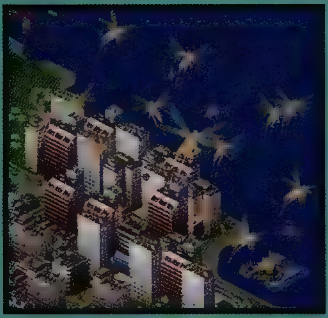


Totally New
Building Sets



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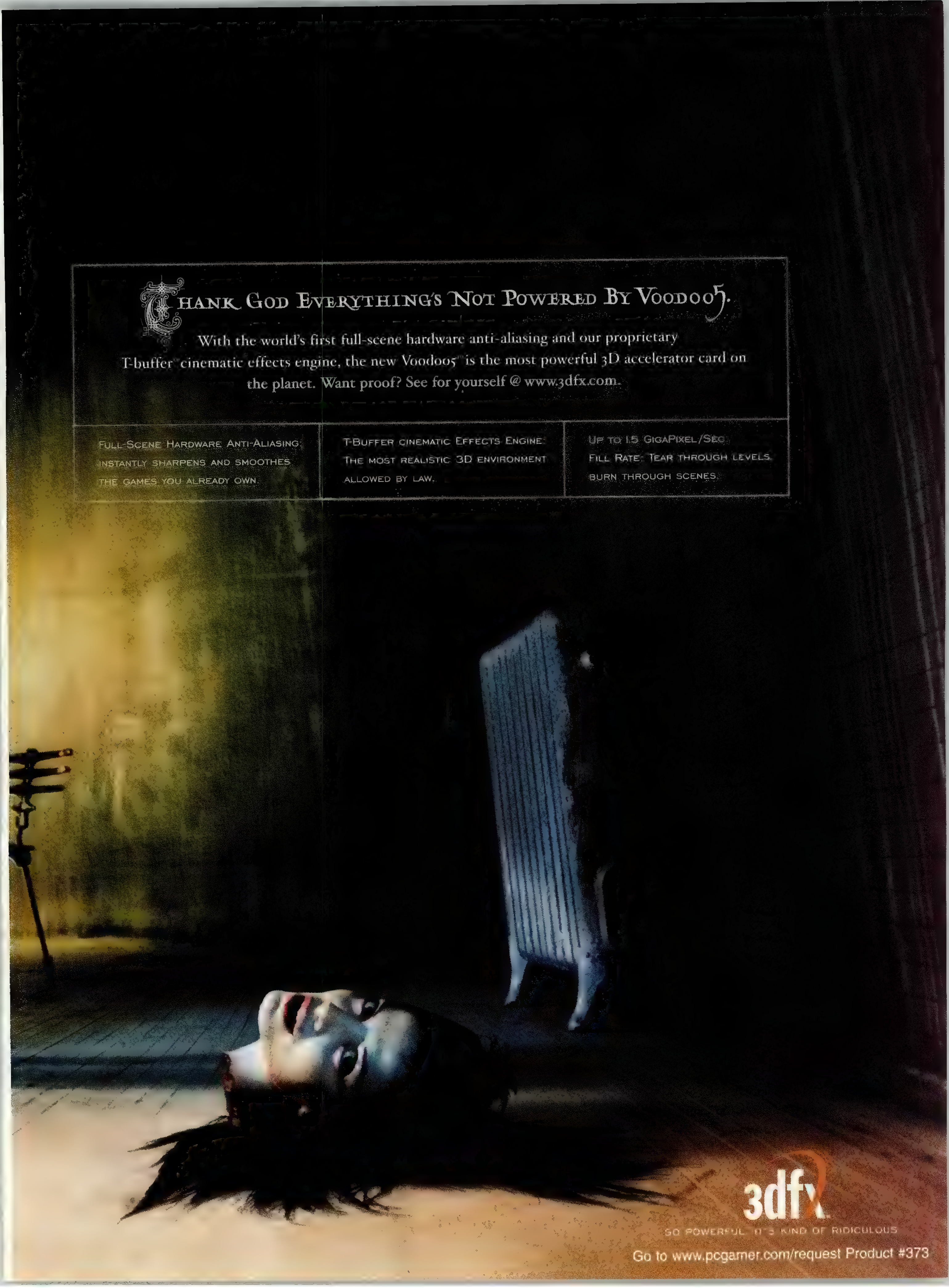

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AUGUST 2000

HARDSTUFF

THE ULTIMATE MONTHLY GUIDE TO GAMING GEAR

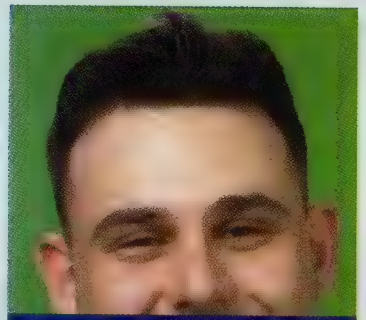
GeForce 2 versus Voodoo5...

WE HAVE A WINNER

(It's not this guy)

She didn't pick me... again!

HSCONTENTS



Tiffany Has Spoken!

Last month, our friend Tiffany (the lovely young lady regaling the cover of the Hard Stuff this month and last) had a tough choice to make: what's more attractive, the Voodoo5 5500, the GeForce2 GTS, or me? Suffice it to say, she didn't pick me, but since last month's video card feature was only a preview of beta boards and software, she wasn't able to make a definitive call on the winner, either. This month I've tested final products, so Tiff has made up her mind, and I'm sad to report that she still hasn't picked me *(shocker — Ed)*. I don't get it. I'm nice *(cough)*, I'm bright *(splutter)*, I'm dark *(meaning what?)*, I'm handsome *(apparently even your Mom won't commit to that one)*, but still, she won't give me the time of day. My tender man-feelings have been hurt by Tiffany's rejection, so please, you'll have to bear with me for a moment while I sob quietly to myself....

Whew! I'm feeling much better now! It's amazing what a good cry'll do for ya *(if you're a girl)*! Ya'll should try it some time *(thanks, but we're guys...)*!

Also worth mentioning this month is our first-ever review of a mouse pad! Yes, I know what you're thinking — "Who cares?" But this new surface really does stand tall above the crowd as the finest thing since sliced bread! Or was it the finest thing since breakfast? I can't remember...The important thing is that it rocks, and that, hey, you've got disposable income.

Greg Vederman, Technical Editor

HSREVIEWS

3DFX VOODOO5 5500 .... PAGE 117
The first of the new Voodoo5 cards has arrived! Is it all we had hoped and more? Well, in a word, no...

ELSA GLADIAC GEFORCE2 GTS .... PAGE 118
ELSA has a new GeForce 2 GTS card on the market. We let you know how it stacks up against the Voodoo5 5500.

SURFACE 1030 MOUSE PAD .... PAGE 119
They said it couldn't be done, but here it is — the pad above all other pads.

HSTECHQ&A

SIRENS AND ENGLISH LESSONS... .... PAGE 120
Could it all have anything less to do with hardware?

HARDSTUFF
GeForce 2 versus Voodoo5
WE HAVE A WINNER

PHOTOS BY AARON LAUER

How We Rate the Hard Stuff

You've been around long enough to know the greatest technology doesn't mean a thing unless it improves the games you love to play. Our reviews focus on real-world testing, but when a number is in order for comparisons, we use the benchmarking tools developed by our hardware-frenzied sister publication *Maximum PC*. Between our testing and the BenchMarks, you'll get the straight story.

HSTRINITY

Welcome to a BRAVE NEW WORLD

So you want to build a new PC, huh? As you may know, it can be a tricky affair. Luckily, Hard Stuff editor Greg Vederman is here to help you select the best parts for the job. The prices listed below reflect the lowest prices we could find as we went to press (obtained almost entirely from *www.pricewatch.com*).

ENTRY-LEVEL SYSTEM
PRICE: ROUGHLY $999

- **CASE:** Addtronics 6890A $100
- **PROCESSOR:** Intel Celeron 533MHz PPGA $103
- **MOTHERBOARD:** A-Bit BE6 ..... $102
- **MEMORY:** 128MB PC-100 SDRAM $83
- **PPGA (SOCKET 370) CONVERTER:** AB-RS370 ..... $15
- **CD-ROM/DVD-ROM:** Hi-Val 6X Pioneer DVD-ROM drive w/software DVD decoding $115
- **FLOPPY DRIVE:** Samsung 3.5" 1.44MB $8
- **HARD DRIVE:** 10.2GB Maxtor DiamondMax 6800 ..... $97
- **SOUND CARD:** Creative Labs SBLive! Value $36
- **MODEM:** 3COM #5685 56K v. 90 ..... $85
- **MONITOR:** 17" Optiquest Q71 ..... $170
- **VIDEO CARD:** 3dfx Voodoo3 3000 ..... $89
- **JOYSTICK:** Logitech WingMan Digital $17
- **GAMEPAD:** Microsoft Sidewinder Gamepad $23
- **SPEAKERS:** Labtech LCS-2414 ..... $35
- **KEYBOARD:** Addtronics $15
- **USB MOUSE:** Logitech or Microsoft $39

TOTAL $1,132

MID-RANGE SYSTEM
PRICE: ROUGHLY $1,800

- **CASE:** Addtronics 6890A $100
- **PROCESSOR:** Intel Pentium III 700MHz $338
- **MOTHERBOARD:** Asus P3C-E $166
- **MEMORY:** 128MB PC-100 SDRAM $83
- **CD-ROM/DVD-ROM:** Creative Labs Encore 8X with Dxr3 ..... $189
- **FLOPPY DRIVE:** Samsung 3.5" 1.44MB $8
- **HARD DRIVE:** 16.8GB Maxtor DiamondMax $131
- **SOUND CARD:** Creative Labs SBLive! MP3+ $69
- **MODEM:** 3COM #5685 56K v. 90 ..... $85
- **MONITOR:** 19" Optiquest Q95 ..... $299
- **VIDEO CARD:** Creative Labs 3D Blaster TNT2 Ultra $148
- **JOYSTICK:** Microsoft Sidewinder Precision Pro $53
- **GAMEPAD:** Microsoft Sidewinder Gamepad $23
- **SPEAKERS:** Cambridge SoundWorks FPS 1000 ..... $70
- **KEYBOARD:** Addtronics $15
- **USB MOUSE:** Logitech or Microsoft $39

TOTAL $1,816

HIGH-END SYSTEM
PRICE: $3,000 AND ABOVE

- **CASE:** Addtronics 6890A $100
- **PROCESSOR:** Intel Pentium 866MHz $843
- **MOTHERBOARD:** Asus P3C-E $166
- **MEMORY:** 256MB RDRAM $1,105
- **CD-ROM/DVD-ROM:** Pioneer HDVD10AS-00R1 10X DVD-ROM with MPG2 card. $259
- **FLOPPY DRIVE:** Samsung 3.5" 1.44MB $8
- **HARD DRIVE:** Maxtor 40GB Ultra 66 EIDE $238
- **SOUND CARD:** Creative Labs SBLive! MP3+ $69
- **MODEM:** 3COM #5685 56K v.90 ..... $85
- **MONITOR:** 19" Optiquest Q95 ..... $299
- **VIDEO CARD:** NVIDIA GeForce 256-based card with DDR RAM (e.g. Guillemot 3D Prophet DDR) $211
- **JOYSTICK:** Saitek X36 Flight Control System (USB) $96
- **GAMEPAD:** Microsoft Sidewinder Gamepad $23
- **SPEAKERS:** Klipsch ProMedia v.2-400 ..... $249
- **KEYBOARD:** Microsoft Natural Keyboard Pro $75
- **USB MOUSE:** Original IntelliMouse with IntelliEye technology $55

TOTAL $3,881

■ 3DFX

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Technically, if things had gone according to 3dfx's original plan, we wouldn't be reviewing the Voodoo5 5500 this month, but instead we'd be looking at Rampage, 3dfx's next 3D card technology. That's right, this current generation of 3dfx hardware is that late. With this is mind, many of you are probably wondering if the Voodoo5 5500 has what it takes to be competitive against NVIDIA's latest, the GeForce2 GTS. The answer is, unfortunately, no. But truth be told, there is room for a bit of subjectivity here. As was the case when NVIDIA's original TNT battled 3dfx's Voodoo 2, this round of 3D fighting is a case of image quality versus speed. Only in this case, the roles are reversed, with NVIDIA possessing the overwhelming speed edge while 3dfx holds a slight edge in image quality.

When it was first announced to the press more than a year ago, VSA-100 technology (the chip that powers all of the Voodoo4 and 5 line) was proclaimed to be able to churn out 60fps at 1024x768 with 32-bit color and with FSAA turned on. FSAA is full screen anti-aliasing, and it's a technology used to smooth out the jagged lines you see in 3D games. The VSA-100 does this in hardware by looking at the colors that make up the jagged lines as well as the colors that surround them. Then, wherever there'd ordinarily be a "jaggy," the VSA-100 blends the rough edges with a color somewhere in-between the color of the line and the color of the background, thereby making the rough edge harder to detect with the naked eye. As an added benefit, this feature can be used with just about every existing Glide, OpenGL, and D3D title already on the shelves — no special programming or patches required. Anyway, the Voodoo5 5500 was supposed to be able to run with this feature turned on and still yield blisteringly fast frame rates. This, sadly, never came to pass. At 1024x768x32, *Quake III* drops from nearly 62fps with FSAA turned off, to below 30fps with medium quality (2X) FSAA turned on. And with 4X, high quality FSAA, frame rates dip well below the playable limit. It should be noted, however, that in 16-bit color with these same settings, you will get playable frame rates if your CPU is fast enough.

AARON LAUER

Because of this large dip in performance, 3dfx is now recommending that FSAA not be used in action-based, first person shooters — certainly not a deal killer since jaggies are the last thing you're worried about when trying to avoid being gibbed. Still, it's a broken promise on 3dfx's part, and if the feature was as fast as was originally planned, you can be sure that 3dfx wouldn't have shipped the card with any caveats. Realistically, to get playable frame rates with FSAA and true, 32-bit color, you're going to want to run on a fast CPU (600MHz and above) and set your resolutions no higher than 800x600.

That brings us to another point; in case you hadn't picked up on it by now, unlike all prior generations of Voodoo, the Voodoo5 can render in 32-bit color. Not only that, but it supports large textures (2k x 2k) and DXTC (DirectX texture compression). When running with these new features, with or without FSAA, games look great; fog and smoke effects finally look as they should, and *Quake III* looks especially fine with all its effects set to max.

Still, there's this issue of raw frame rate versus image quality. Without FSAA, the GeForce2 GTS is considerably faster than the 5500 at all but the very highest resolutions. The difference between 110fps and 80fps might not be noticeable to the naked eye, but with upcoming games promising more graphical goodness than ever before, don't we need all the power we can get? Plus, as good as games look with Voodoo5, they don't look any worse on the new GeForce — even with FSAA, because the GeForce2 GTS does FSAA, too (more on that in our GeForce2 review on the next page).

Ultimately, the Voodoo5 5500 is a good card that's about as fast as an original GeForce, but because it's so late, the GeForce2 has been able to come from behind and steal a lot of its thunder. If you can get a good price on one, and you want the best FSAA money can buy, it's going to please you. But, if you're looking for the best card overall, GeForce2 is the way to go — at least until the Voodoo5 6000 hits the shelves in the very near future with its four VSA-100 chips and 128MB of RAM (and exorbitant price).

BENCHMARKS

Tested on Athlon 1GHz system

3DMARK 2000
(32-bit color and textures with 24-bit Z and tripple buffer)

800x600
(first number AA off, second number "2X AA," third number "4X AA")
3,650, 2,555, 1,068 3D Marks

- Game 1 Helicopter
low detail - 76.4, 50.3, 19.5fps
med detail - 49.0, 36.8, 14.6fps
high detail - 19.0, 16.0, 7.3fps
- Game 2 Adventure
low detail - 89.6, 46.7, 17.3fps
med detail - 49.3, 39.1, 15.9fps
high detail - 27.7, 27.4, 14.4fps
- Fill Rate: 378.4, 182.5, 64.9fps

1024x768
(No AA, 2X AA, 4XAA)
3232, 1628, 528 3DMarks

- Game 1 Helicopter
low detail: 66.1, 29.5, 10.1 fps
med detial: 46.4, 21.9, 7.6 fps
high detail: 20.1, 10.8, 3.9 fps
- Game 2 Adventure
low detail: 63.0, 26.7, 8.3 fps
med detail: 45.9, 24.9, 7.4 fps
high detail: 27.9, 21.9, 6.7 fps
- Fill Rate: 486.0, 209.8, 55.0fps Megatexels ps

QUAKE III
(32-bit color and textures with all effects set to max)
(AA off, 2X AA, 4X AA)
640x480 - 81.1, 70.2, 36.5fps
800x600 - 79.4, 80.9, 19.0fps
1024x768 - 61.8, 28.9, 9.8fps
1600x1200 - 22.5, 8.4, Failed

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS Two VSA-100 chips; best looking FSAA on the market; 32-bit color; DXTC; T-Buffer effects.

LOWS Not as fast as it should have been; FSAA slows games way down when used with 32-bit color.

BOTTOM LINE Late but good, the Voodoo5 5500 is competition for the GeForce, but not the GeForce 2 GTS.

■ ELSA

GLADIAC GeForce 2 GTS (32MB)

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

You'll be glad you have a GLADIAC...No, that sounds way too dorky.

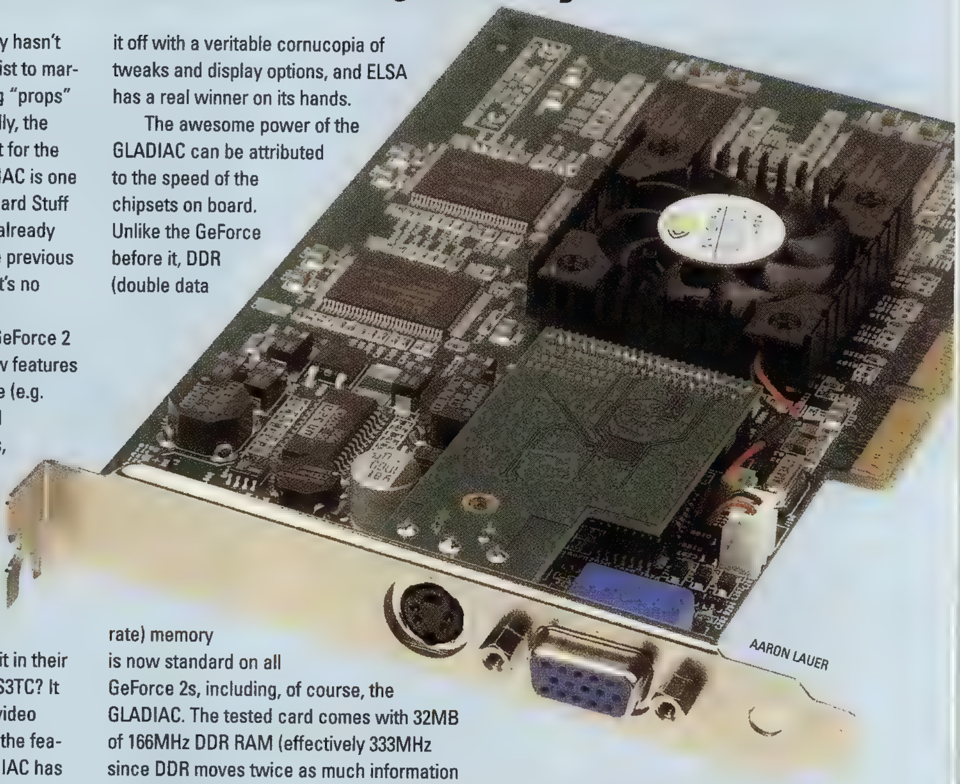
COMPANY
ELSA, (800) 272-ELSA, *www.elsa.com*

PRICE
$350 (M.S.R.P.)

Being a relatively small company hasn't stopped ELSA from being the fist to market with a GeForce 2 GTS card — big "props" for beating the competition! Thankfully, the early birds didn't cut any corners just for the sake of a quick release — the GLADIAC is one hell of a card! If you're reading the Hard Stuff sequentially this month, then you've already read our Voodoo5 5500 review on the previous page. While it's a decent performer, it's no GLADIAC.

To be fair, like the Voodoo5, the GeForce 2 GTS architecture has its share of new features that aren't likely be used in its lifetime (e.g. 3dfx's T-Buffer effects and GF2's pixel shaders). Like so many new 3D cards, NVIDIA pushed the limits of technology — not so much so you can use the features today...or even tomorrow. No, it's like so you can use them next week, or next month — or however long it takes for game developers to get excited about the technology and implement it in their games. Anyone out there remember S3TC? It took more than three generations of video cards before any game started using the feature. Luckily for ELSA, what the GLADIAC has going for it when used with the games of today keeps it heads and shoulders over competing technologies.

Like any new 3D card should, the GLADIAC supports everything from 32-bit color rendering to large textures (2k x 2k) to DXTC (DirectX texture compression)...and it's fast...like the Roadrunner...on crack. Without a doubt, the GLADIAC is the fastest video card we've ever tested *(how many times have we heard that one over the years? — Ed)*. It was also rock-solid and stable in every system we tested. Top it off with a veritable cornucopia of tweaks and display options, and ELSA has a real winner on its hands.



AARON LAUER

The awesome power of the GLADIAC can be attributed to the speed of the chipsets on board. Unlike the GeForce before it, DDR (double data rate) memory is now standard on all GeForce 2s, including, of course, the GLADIAC. The tested card comes with 32MB of 166MHz DDR RAM (effectively 333MHz since DDR moves twice as much information as SDR RAM per cycle) — up from 150MHz (300MHz DDR) on the original GeForce. Also, the core of the GPU itself is now at 200MHz — 80MHz faster than its predecessor! For you overclockers out there with good cooling in your computer case, you're likely to be able to push the card even higher with ELSA's included tweaking software. Be aware, however, that increasing the core speed of the GLADIAC doesn't seem to matter nearly as much as pumping up the memory speed. This is due to the fact that, as standard, the GeForce 2 GTS is memory bandwidth bottlenecked (say that a few times fast). The faster the memory, the larger the pipe — meaning more info can get through at a time. As it is, clocking the core higher without bumping up the memory speed won't gain you much at all.

As touched on in our Voodoo5 5500 review, the GLADIAC (by way of GeForce 2) offers hardware FSAA (full scene anti-aliasing) that works with just about every OpenGL game under the sun. Unfortunately, while FSAA in OpenGL-based games is fairly stable, the same can't be said for D3D. While FSAA in D3D is technically supported, as it stands right now, getting it to work is hit and miss. Future drivers should clear this up, but for now, just be aware of the problem. If you really want to have this feature in D3D, consider the Voodoo5 as an alternative. As for how FSAA looks on the GLADIAC, it's pretty good — not quite as nice as what 3dfx is doing with its implementation, but definitely nipping at its heals (check out the massive Voodoo5/GeForce 2 preview that we ran in last month's issue for screen shots that will clearly demonstrate FSAA for you if you've never seen it before).

Now for the big question: If you already have a GeForce (with DDR memory especially), is now the right time to upgrade? Not unless you're mad-crazy-rich. There is a nice performance gain from one to the other, but better to wait for the 64MB GF2 cards that are right around the corner and see how much better they perform before jumping in. And if history tells us anything, by the time you're reading this, it'll only be another three or four months before NVIDIA releases its next card!

BENCHMARKS

Tested on Athlon 1GHz system

3D MARK 2000
(32-bit color and textures with 24-bit Z and tripple buffer)

800x600
6,050 3D Marks
- Game 1 Helicopter
low detail - 128.1 fps
med detail - 95.5 fps
high detail - 44.4 fps
- Game 2 Adventure
low detail - 120.4 fps
med detail - 75.0 fps
high detail - 44.8 fps
- Fill Rate:: 535.2 Megatexels/ps

1024x768
4,331 3D Marks
- Game 1 Helicopter
low detail - 84.4 fps
med detail - 60.5 fps
high detail - 29.1 fps
- Game 2 Adventure
low detail - 81.2 fps
med detail - 63.4 fps
high detail - 42.3 fps
- Fill Rate:: 491.9 Megatexels/ps

QUAKE III
(32-bit color and textures with all efects set set to max)
(first number "AA on," second number "AA off")
640x480 - 109.6, 47.5
800x600 - 96.9, 25.7
1024x768 - 69.0, 15.7
1600x1200 - 28.4, failed

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS Super fast; great image quality; FSAA; improved T&L; DDR RAM.

LOWS It ain't cheap; FSAA not very functional in D3D and pretty slow in OpenGL.

BOTTOM LINE NVIDIA and ELSA have done it again. If you're looking for the fastest accelerator on the market today, you're going to want a GLADIAC.

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

FUNC INDUSTRIES

sUrface 1030

COMPANY
fUnc Industries *www.func.net*
PRICE
$19.95

OTHER OPTIONS

When it comes to mouse pads (or "surfaces" as they're called these days), a lot of subjectivity comes into play. What might be great for one person might not be the best for someone else (which is precisely why the 1030 comes with two different textures, by the way). Still, both 3M and EverGlide do make dandy surfaces. Check them out at *www.3m.com* and *www.everglide.com*.

A mouse pad is a mouse pad is a mouse pad, right? Kinda. But lately products like the 3M Precise series and EverGlide Mousing Surface have been preying on your gaming dedication, playing with that desire for extra frags. And here comes another option, the sUrface1030 from fUnc industries — and it's arguably the best mousing surface ever created.

AARON LAUER

Comprised of the two-man marketing team from what used to be The Wicked3D Board Company (Metabyte), the founders of fUnc left their cushy jobs behind, and spent a lot of time playing PC games. During this time, they discovered that neither the 3M nor the EverGlide pads were ideal solutions for hardcore gamers, and they set out to do much better. Partnering up with Act Labs, fUnc set out on a quest to make a pad that their gaming friends would love and that they'd want to use themselves. As gamers, we're very happy to see that their dream has been realized.

The surface itself is double-sided. One side has a very fine-grained texture that is exceptionally smooth, and the other side is a bit coarser. Both textures are amazingly precise, and either side can be used simply by removing the pad and flipping it over in its rubber surround base (which does a terrific job of keeping the 1030 still on your desktop). Another great feature is 1030's mouse cord clip. It attaches to the rubber base and keeps your mouse cord under control so you aren't constantly trying to pull the darn thing free from underneath some random obstacle on the desk. This clip feature is something we can't recall seeing before but should be a standard feature of any mouse pad in the future.

At $19.99, the sUrface1030 isn't exactly cheap, but we've been using one for a good long while now, and since it's made of high quality plastic and rubber, the thing simply won't wear out. Plus, like the EverGlide, it can be washed with warm water and soap if it starts getting a bit dirty from prolonged use. In a nutshell, if you aren't happy with the mouse pad you've got, the sUrface1030 is sure to make your booty move.

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS Dual surfaces; mouse cord clip; comes in a very fancy, brushed metal case for carrying around to gaming events.

LOWS If anything, it's a bit large at 8x11 inches; it's also pricey for a mouse pad.

BOTTOM LINE A mousing surface made by gamers, for gamers. It rocks!

The Klipsch ProMedia™ v.2-400
Klipsch
LUCASFILM THX
400 WATTS OF CRISP, CLEAN KNOCK-YOUR-SOCKS-OFF SOUND
ANANDTECH.COM, OCT. 1999
(Klipsch takes no responsibility for cold feet)
THX®-Certified PC audio system from a "well-heeled" leader in the industry. Get them for only $249 at:
www.klipsch.com

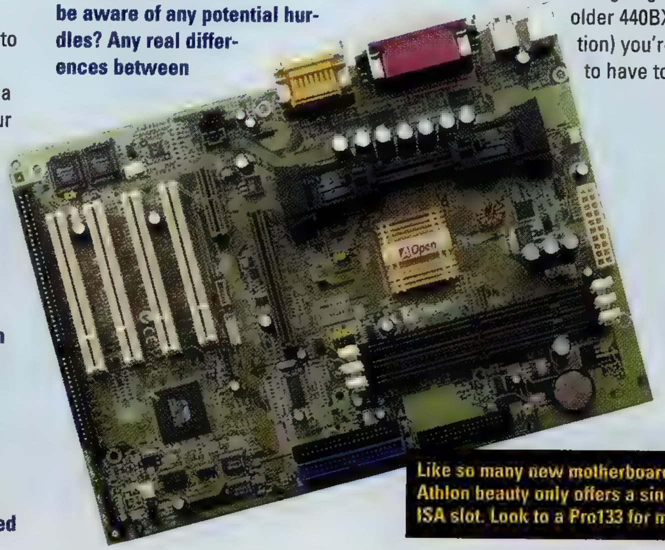
The first question is presented in all its unedited glory

Q **My computer makes this sirenlike sound when I play for hours it will then crap up and begins to slow what's wrong?**
— Name withheld (to protect the US education system), via the Internet

A Crap up problems can be difficult to diagnose, so I can understand why you might be having difficulties getting to the root of the problem. The sirenlike sound you're hearing could be a heat temperature warning from your motherboard — in which case, you'll probably want to add an internal fan or two to your computer case. Then again, it could also be the sound of your English teacher crying.

Q **I have a computer that I'm interested in upgrading. I had been planning to follow the "How-To" guide you wrote several months back, but when I started looking around for parts, I realized that I didn't know jack. The problem is that Intel-based motherboards come with only one ISA slot, and I need two. I know that going the AMD route is an option, but I'd like to stay with Intel if at all possible. So, what motherboard should I get for a 700MHz PIII that offers four PCI, one AGP, and two ISA slots? Also, if I were to take the cheaper/faster Athlon route, should I be aware of any potential hurdles? Any real differences between building an Athlon system and building a Pentium III system?**
— Jeremy Nuckoles, via the Internet

A If you want a motherboard that will support Coppermine and comes with two or more ISA slots, (other than going for an older 440BX solution) you're going to have to look for one with a VIA-Apollo Pro133 chipset like the P3V133 from Asus (*www.asus.com*), or the VA6 from A-bit (*www.abit-usa.com*). If you go the AMD route, just make sure that you get a motherboard with the newer VIA KX133 chipset — though I'm not aware of any such boards that come with more than a single ISA slot. If you find a way to get around your two ISA requirement, building an Athlon system is just about exactly the same as building a PIII system, so you'll still be able to use the "How-To" guide when assembling all the parts.



Like so many new motherboards, this Athlon beauty only offers a single ISA slot. Look to a Pro133 for more.

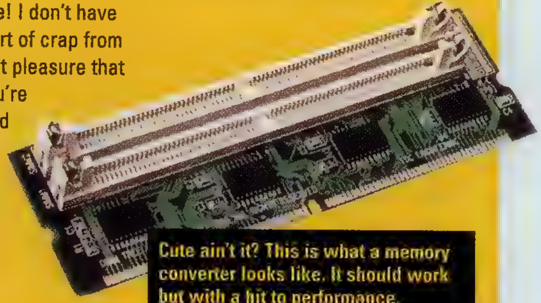
NEED HELP?

If you have a hardware question or comment, or a personal problem, write to:
Greg Vederman,
Hard Stuff, PC Gamer
150 North Hill Drive,
Brisbane, CA 94005
or E-mail:
gvederman@pcgamer.com

DEARGREG

Q **Hey Greg, I have a problem. I wanted to write you a Dear Greg letter so I could have a chance of getting my question answered in the magazine, but try as I might, I couldn't think of a personal problem, so I just put "Dear Greg" in my E-mail's subject line, hoping that you'd be sucked in. Well, here's my technical question: I've finally gotten myself a job so that I can upgrade my motherboard. I have done a lot of price shopping using search engines and *www.pricewatch.com*. I thought I had found the perfect motherboard for me, but then I realized my RAM is in the form of SIMMs rather than DIMMs, and the motherboard I had been looking at uses PC100 DIMMs. Because of this, I have once again started to search for a board that will accommodate my older memory, but I simply can't find one that supports a 500MHz Celeron and SIMMs. Does such a thing exist?**
— Jake Weedon, via the Internet

A You scum bag! Tricking me that way... playing with my emotions! I'll have you know that my grandfather used to be a meteorologist, and that my mother is *still* a nurse! I don't have to put up with this sort of crap from you! So it's with great pleasure that I can tell you that you're screwed. You can find converters that should allow you to use 72pin SIMMs in many DIMM-based motherboards (e.g. *www.datasolution.com/products/prod09.html*), but there are some big-time performance issues (i.e. you'll lose your fair share of it). I strongly recommend saving up the extra cash and buying new memory. Also, since it's clear to me that you're the most vile type of fungus imaginable, you might also consider saving up for some classes on kindness and polite behavior — two areas of life where I excel.



Cute ain't it? This is what a memory converter looks like. It should work but with a hit to performance.

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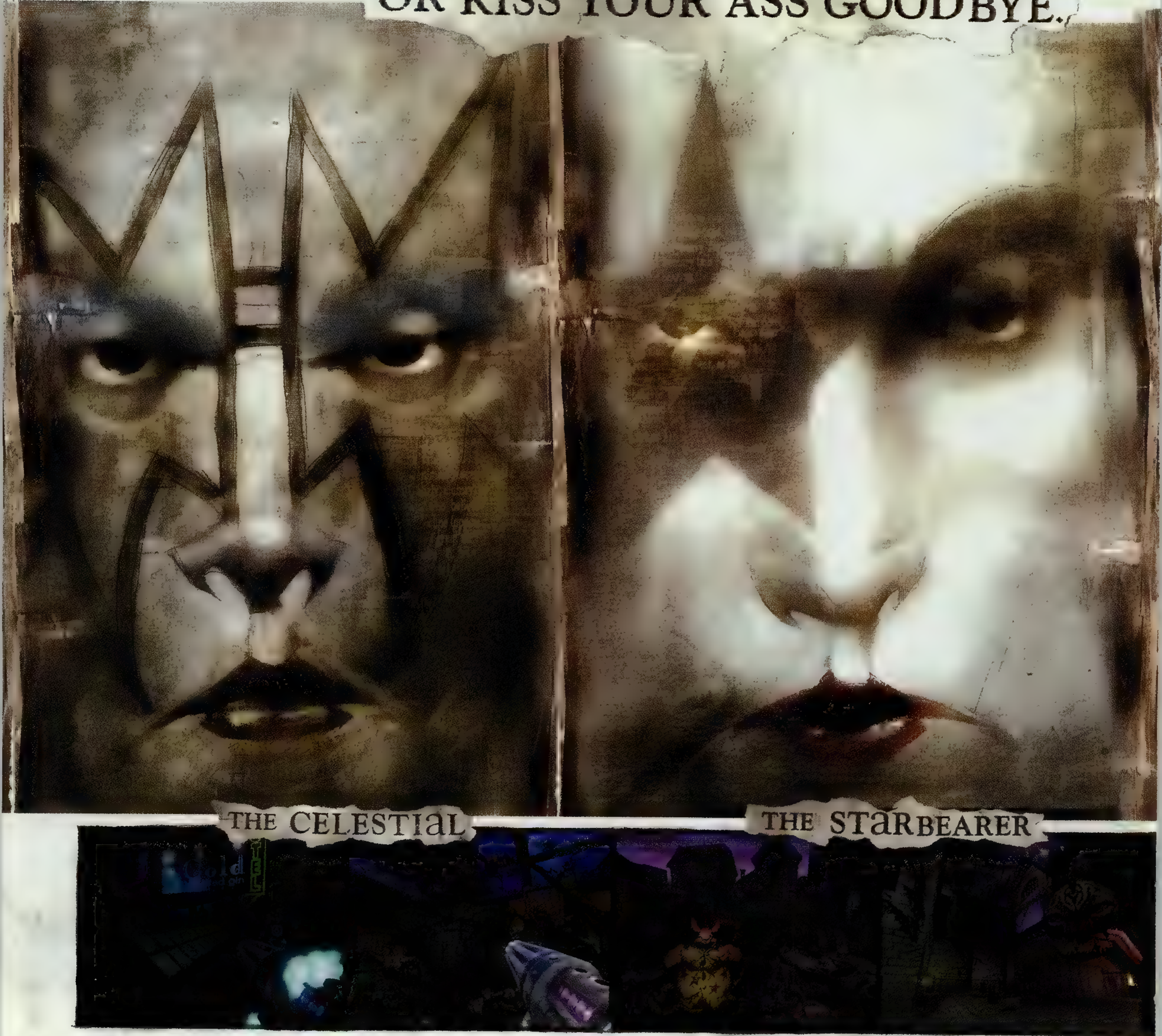

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RATING PENDING RP CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

LITHTECH ENGINE

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THE DEMON
THE BEASTKING
"A wildly original game world, and some of the most frenetic action seen to date."
–NextGen Magazine, February 2000
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THIRD LAW
GATHERING OF DEVELOPERS
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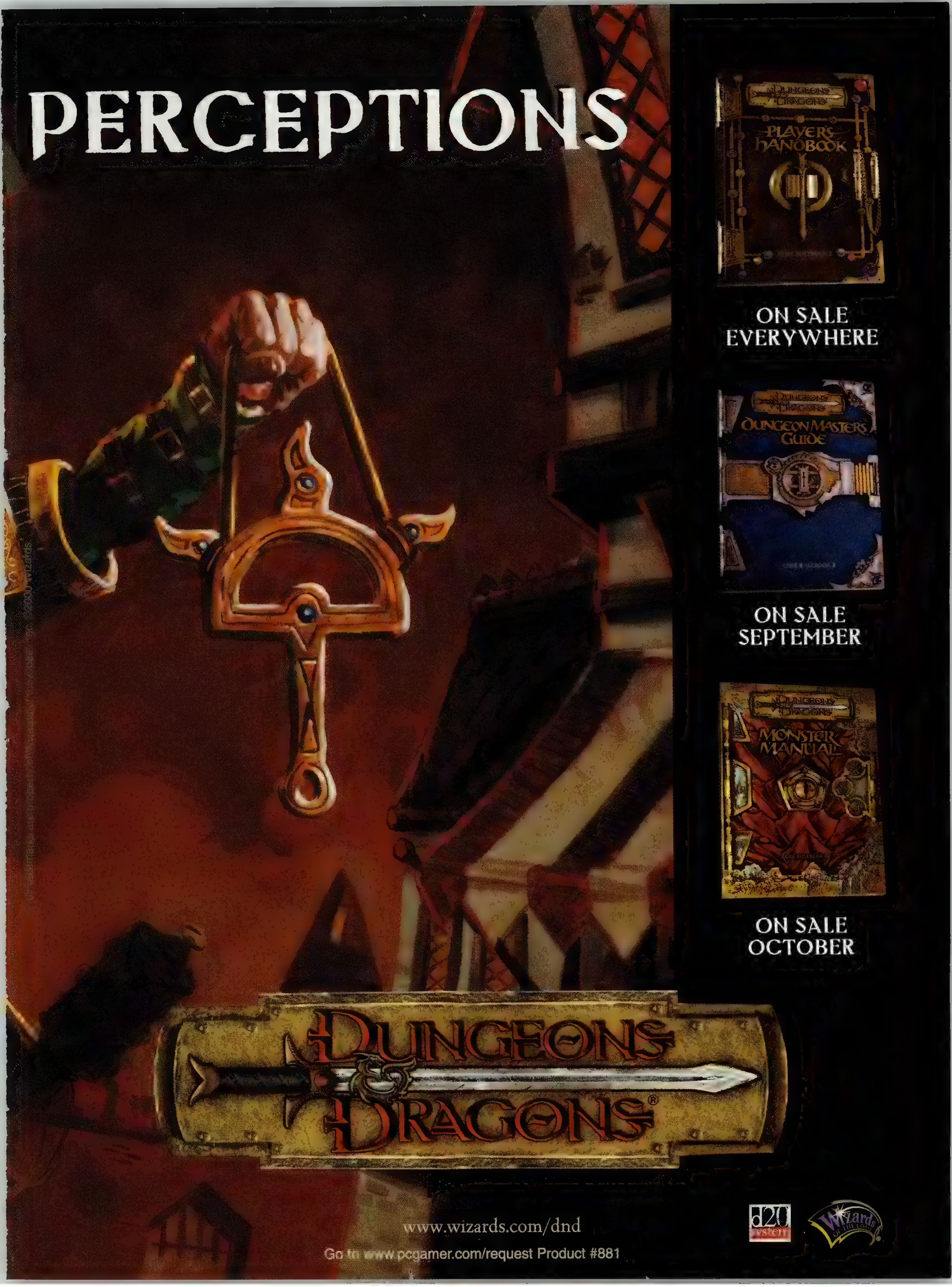
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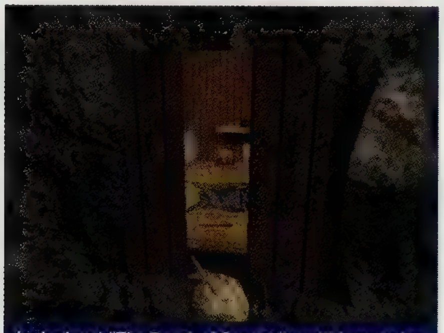
T. LIAM MCDONALD
extendedplay@pcgamer.com

Thief of Hard Drives

Looking Glass may be out of business, but not even that has stopped the continuing pleasures of the Thief series.

When *Thief Gold* and its DromEd mission editor came out last year, I quietly mentioned them, urged players who had missed the initial release to check it out, and moved on to other games. *Thief* has never been an in-your-face game with a loud fan base, and its user levels were too easily lost amid all those new *Half-Life*, *Unreal*, and *Q3* levels. The vastly entertaining *Thief 2* sneaked in on similar cat feet, once again drawing criticism from the short-sighted for its trailing-edge graphics, but praise from hardcore gamers enamored of its deep world and unique gameplay. And its user levels just can't be ignored this time around.



In the level "The Death of Garrett," you'll have to be clever. Breach this wall by throwing rubble at it.

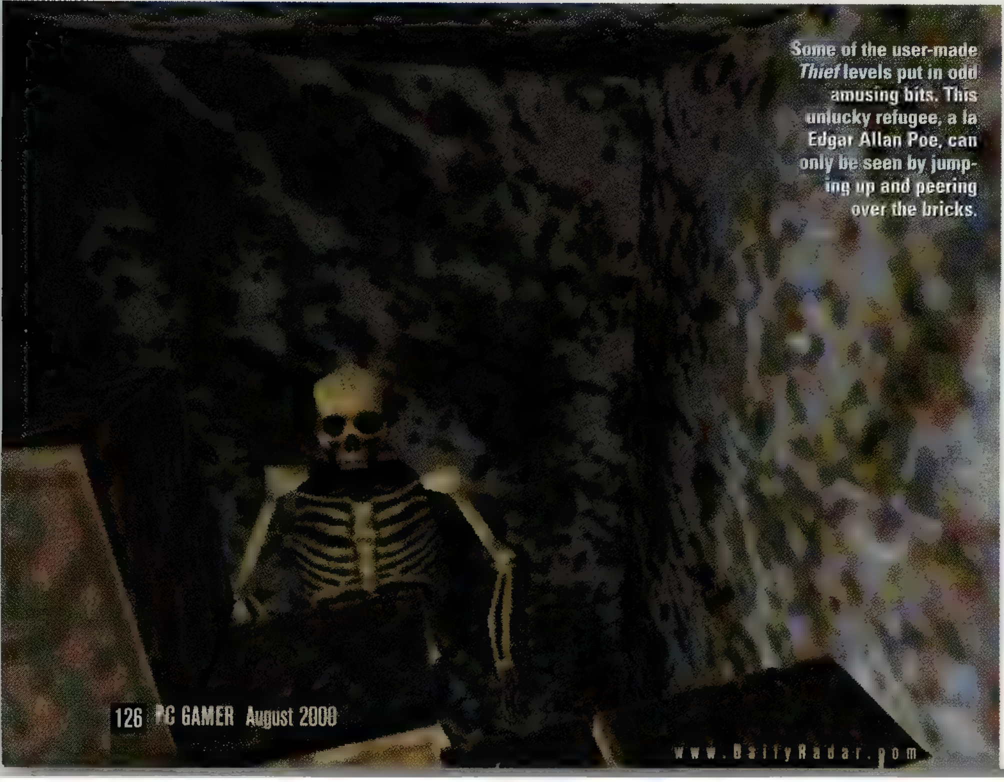
Having finished all the levels in *Thief 2* and remembering that DromEd had been circulating for a long time, I went searching for a *Thief* level community. While there are far, far fewer sites than can be found for more popular games (Yahoo! listed only the official Dromed link in their "Levels, Maps, and Mods" category), there is a small but thriving and fanatically loyal community to be found at The Circle of Stone and Shadow (*www.thief-darkproject.com*). The site is full of news and downloads, including plenty of superb user-created levels for *Thief* and *Thief 2*. It's a very active community, even in the wake of Looking Glass's closure. There are constant updates, discussion boards that manage to be lively with little trolling or rudeness, and ratings for all the missions. This site is part of Through the Looking Glass (*www.ttlg.com*), a group of semi-pro sites covering all Looking Glass titles in great depth and with LG's blessing.

> I had a chance to test a few of the higher-rated levels and found some of them better than the official missions!

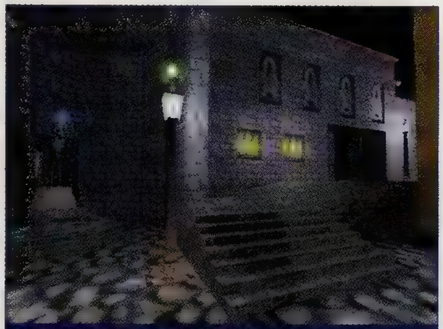
For starters, you'll need to download DarkLoader in order to swap between levels quickly and easily. Created by Andrew Bednarz and offered as freeware, DarkLoader is a clean and helpful utility. New levels are downloaded as .ZIPs, which are then placed, still zipped, directly into the /MISSION folder in your *Thief*, *Thief Gold*, or *Thief 2* directory. DarkLoader unzips these missions on the fly, overwriting the default mission files (but giving you a choice to restore them). It can handle both single missions and multiple mission sets. Right now, levels made for *Thief* won't run on *Thief 2*, but conversions are in the works.

There are several dozen scratch-built missions broken down by ratings into Gold, Silver, and Bronze. As a testament to rigorous testing and evaluation, there are currently no missions rated at Gold. There are also modified versions of existing *Thief* levels, "unrated" levels offered as-is, and several multi-mission campaigns. Submission requirements are extensive, demanding very specific text file information and structuring, which gives downloads a comforting sense of standardization.

I had a chance to test a few of the higher-rated levels and found some of them better than the official missions! They take more chances, and are often a little more clever and elaborate. Users seem to prefer creating multiple victory conditions with a



Some of the user-made *Thief* levels put in odd amusing bits. This unlucky refugee, a la Edgar Allan Poe, can only be seen by jumping up and peering over the bricks.



The "Gathering at the Bar" level has architecture that stands with the best from the original.

24
Broadhead Arrow

Considering that the user-made levels found online are scratch-built with DromEd, their level of polish is amazingly high.

larger set of specific items that need to be found. DromEd is a powerful editor, allowing users to create evolving storylines in-mission through voice-over, dialogue, and scrolls. Since *Thief* missions are unique to begin with, you can offer many different approaches: sneaking, assassination, knockouts, or outright combat. These are not, of course, perfect missions. Some occasional bugs or misaligned brushes sneak in, but many are surprisingly professional.

There's a wider range of mission types than can be found in the original (or in any FPS, for that matter), with some pretty interesting puzzle situations. In "The Library," for instance, you need to stack some boxes (it's not at all like *Trespasser*, really!) to climb on a roof, then put out a fireplace fire in order to shimmy down the chimney and into the kitchen. "The Death of Garrett" received a glowing review, and it wasn't an exaggeration: this is a fabulous level in which you must escape from a deep cave without weapons. "Bloodstone Prison" is chillingly atmospheric, thanks to effective sound design, while "Lord Edmund Entertains" is a near-perfect blend of story, puzzles, and sneaking. "The Docks," "The Monastery of St. Fera," "Gathering at the Bar," and the "Strain" campaign all reward their meager download times with superb gameplay. Anything from level designers Banshee, Mokkis, and Kung Fu Gecko is worth your time.

For those who want to get into building, the Builder's Academy section of the site is filled with a staggering array of information on level building. No kidding: I have never seen a better set of instructions and tutorials for level building, all well-written, detailed, and carefully categorized for ease of use. A lot of people put a lot of work into this, and it shows. **PCG**

SHORT TAKES

- Talonsoft is proving to be master of the re-pack. Three compilations arrived on my desk at once, but they'll be forgiven this time because all three are worth playing and provide decent value. *The Operational Art of War: A Century of Warfare* includes both *TOAW 1* and *2* along with both mission packs plus an exclusive new World War One database. All the content runs from a single install, which makes it handy for a hard case like me.
- *Europe in Flames* is a bundle of *West Front* with both *Battle Pack 1* and *Operation Sea Lion* plus *East Front II*, for a nice grand total of 300 scenarios.
- The *Hidden & Dangerous Action Pack* puts the original game together with the add-on in a single box.

BUG PATCHES

ON THE CD! You'll find these patches on the *CD*! Be sure to read the included readme files for complete info.

- **Tachyon: The Fringe (ttfupd8e.exe)**
Various fixes and improvements; no specific information provided.

- **Star Trek: Armada v1.1 (Armada_patch_1_1.exe)**
Fixes problems with TNT2, GeForce, Intel 810, and Riva 128 3D cards. Also addresses a number of bugs, which include allowing gravity mines to be fired while cloaked and making the sensor jammer more effective by preventing ships from firing at what they cannot see. There are also single-player mission changes and a host of other improvements.

- **Die Hard Trilogy 2 v2.1 (dht2-us-patch.exe)**
Fixes timing problem when using Z-bias compatibility mode (with some nVidia hardware), configuration issues on systems with multiple gaming devices, and an intermittent problem displaying Sharpshooting end-of-level statistics.

- **NASCAR 2000 v1.01 (nascar2000patch01.exe)**
No information available.

- **Quake III Arena v1.17 Point Release (q3pointrelease_117.exe)**
This patch fixes a fairly serious security flaw in *Quake III Arena*. Internet Security Systems identified the flaw and notified id Software with reproduction details as well as an overview of the exploit. The basic nature of the exploit is that malicious server operators could overwrite any file on a client system. This type of thing is always possible with DLL based mods but with this exploit, it was possible within the VM system.

- **Revenant v1.22 (Revpatch_122.exe)**
Various fixes and improvements; no specific information provided.

- **Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2000 v1.1 (tw2000_patch1.exe)**
Includes swing meter improvements, hardware mode fixes related to PIP and Fog settings, leaderboard improvements in PATP, and texture caching optimizations for low-mid (32-64 MB) RAM systems with high (16-32 MB) video RAM cards.

- **Unreal Tournament 420 (utpatch420.exe)**
Version 420 is completely network compatible with all previous public releases of *UT*. It includes a fixed D3D driver that combines the best performance with widest compatibility of previous iterations, improved Voodoo 4 D3D support, fixed installer problem with certain directory structures, fixed security holes and ability to use bad skins, and a new editor.

ROB SMOLKA
pointafter@pcgamer.com

The Death of a Genre

This year's E3 was filled with everything a gamer could hope for — unless you're a sports fan with a PC.

The headline of this month's column may be overstating the situation a bit, but not by much. After attending this year's E3, it's safe to say that the PC sports genre needs to be hooked up to a bypass machine, and have its chest alternately pumped and shocked just to maintain its deathly pulse.

Going in to the show, I knew that things didn't look good. Fox Sports had already announced that it was pulling out of the market. After the basketball game it had the nerve to subject us to, I wasn't sorry to see them go. Its hockey game, however, showed some real potential, and hopefully someone will give the game's developer, Radical, another chance.

That left us with Microsoft and EA Sports as the only companies producing traditional sports games for the upcoming football, basketball, and hockey seasons. I figured these two companies would be enough for me and my fellow sports gamers.

Not so fast, mister. As I was taking a look at how far *Links 2001* had progressed since I previewed it last month, I noticed that neither the new version of *NFL Fever* nor *NBA Inside Drive* was on display at Microsoft's booth. The optimist in me thought, "Hmmm...maybe they're doing something really special with the games and are showing them behind closed doors so that EA Sports can't steal any of their cool ideas!"

> "I noticed that neither the new version of *NFL Fever* nor *NBA Inside Drive* was at Microsoft's booth."

Now you'll start to understand why I'm a pessimist most of the time: No behind closed doors showing...just the news that there would be no new games in either series this year.

The reasoning behind the cancellation was sound, but I doubt the sincerity. I was told that rather than just put out another game with small improvements, Microsoft was going to hold off until it could put out a more complete game. I don't doubt that this is the case...I just doubt that it will be the PC that will benefit from this hiatus. As you probably well know, Microsoft is working on a little side project known as X-Box, a console system designed to compete with — and conquer — Sony, Sega, Nintendo, and whoever else gets in Big Bad Bill's way of dominating another market. It's almost a sure bet that any new versions of Microsoft's sports titles will be designed for this system; if we're lucky, PC users will be thrown a bone in the form of a conversion.

Disappointed, I made my way to the EA Sports booth, hoping to have my spirits lifted. If I didn't know better, I would have thought that EA Sports was going up against Microsoft and was going to market the PlayStation 2...nearly every demo station on the show floor (including the obnoxiously loud thirty-foot screen that played a looping demo of EA's entire product line) was featuring PS2 versions of the game. The one saving grace was *Madden 2001*. When I asked what had been done to improve the game, my heart sunk again; they kept going on about how they used the PS2 models for the PC game, and were pleased with how good it looked — damned eye candy.

If you've taken a look at the sales figures for PC sports games lately, it's not really a surprise that publishers are heading down this road. Due to its phenomenal branding, EA Sports is able to sell respectable amounts of its PC titles, but the numbers pale in comparison to its console figures (usually by a factor of five or six to one!). Sadly, it just doesn't make sense for companies to focus on the PC when there's so little reward. It's just so much smarter to make a game that will sell on a console, and then port it to the PC in hopes of making a buck or two to cover the licensing fees.

Making a sports game for the PC crowd and then hoping to port it to other platforms is a good way to commit financial suicide these days. The best example is the High Heat series; this outstanding game struggles to break the 60,000 mark each year, despite glowing praise from the press and positive word of mouth.

So, fellow sports gamers, what can we do to revive our dying genre on our platform of choice? I don't want to spend the rest of my life sifting through the sands of beautiful but brain-dead games, trying to uncover the rare oases of gameplay. Somebody please give me hope! **PCG**

EA Sports will continue to publish sports games on the PC like *Madden 2001*, but it won't have much competition this year.

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The Killing Box

Bring on the Beefcake

Sure, level designer KillCreek is a hottie. But where is all the male designer eye candy? Right here, baby.

Just when you thought the industry was finally beginning to climb its way out of a pit of moral degradation, a certain prominent design team member posed naked for *Playboy* (Online). Of course, I'm referring to Stevie "KillCreek" Case, an ION Storm employee who has been endowed with two gifts: the ability to churn out *Daikatana* maps, and a curvy form capable of reducing hormonal first-person shooter fan-boys into babbling fools. A handful of my fellow compatriots passed along the URL with the photographs in question, and...oh, dear. Such staggering amounts of naughtiness! Into C:\hotstuff they go.

Miss Case has reached across the gender barrier to secure a job in a marketplace dominated by geeky dorks, and I applaud her accomplishments. However, I feel that it's time for the men of our fine industry to follow her example and make similar strides forward in breaking the gender barrier.

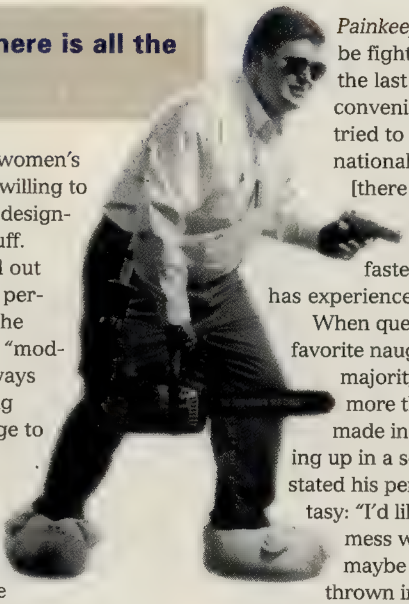
That's why I contacted a handful of industry personalities and asked them about their willingness to pose nude in the pages of *Playgirl*, or any other women's magazine that would be willing to display handsome game designers in the buff.

> Without question, these guys are ready to bare it all for a loving female audience.

It turned out that a good percentage of the prospective "models" had always been holding back the urge to don their birthday suits for public gawking. *Unreal Tournament* designer Cliff "Grand Master Ice Shaft" Bleszinski was the first to come clean: "Ever since I was a toddler and ran around the front yard naked, scaring the neighbors, it's been my lifelong dream to show people my beautiful, pasty ass," he says.

Gathering of Developers CEO Mike "Cat Daddy" Wilson agrees: "I've wanted to pose in the buff for as long as I can remember...which is only about a day and a half these days," he says.

Without question, these guys are ready to bare it all for a loving female audience. "If I were to appear in *Playgirl*, you wouldn't be able to find enough trees in this country to print the magazine," says Robert "Sgt. Hulka" Waring of Team Evolve, the group behind the



Painkeep add-on. "There would be fights in line as to who got the last issue; traffic jams at convenience stores as women tried to get their copies — national panic would set in, [there would be] fires and looting. Needless to say, I would sell copies faster than anything *Playgirl* has experienced before!"

When questioned about their favorite naughty whimsies, the majority of designers were more than open. Wilson, who made industry history by showing up in a schoolgirl outfit at E3, stated his perfect mag-posing fantasy: "I'd like to be in a tangled mess with other 'schoolgirls,' maybe with Alanis Morissette thrown in," he says. Cliffy B's response? "Oil. Lots of oil. And my medallion hanging in a strategic location," he says.

Former id Software modeler Paul Steed (who also shares the schoolgirl fetish, dubbing himself "The Baaaaad Professor") was more than content to be featured in a photo spread consisting of him and his sword, referring, of course, to the enormous claymore that sits in the corner of his office. Steed's in-magazine interview would doubtlessly bring up his favorite romantic activity: "Candle-lit dinners wearing nothing but Mexican wrestling masks," he says.

"*Playgirl* readers need to know what a real heterosexual male looks like," says Hulka. "Yes, the men shown in *Playgirl* are very good-looking, but in reality, they're about as macho as Calista Flockhart."

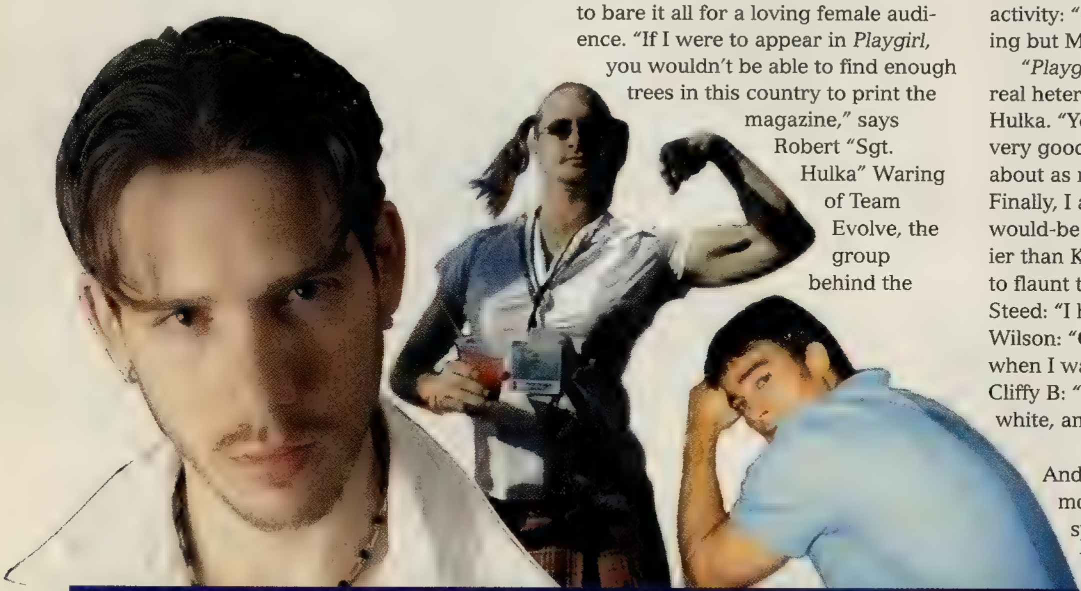
Finally, I asked my testosterone-dripping would-be models as to why they were sexier than KillCreek, and why they deserved to flaunt their stuff:

Steed: "I have a nicer butt."

Wilson: "Gay men always whistle and howl when I walk by in pigtails."

Cliffy B: "I have a pretty bum. It is small, white, and shiny. It is so very perky."

And there you have it. Tune in next month, when we'll be unveiling our special "centerfold" section for all the ladies out there. Trust us — you won't wanna be anywhere near it! PCG



Come on and show us your stuff! The boys of game design are ready to make your secret romantic fantasies come true.

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MICHAEL WOLF
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Just Give Me Adventure

The Wolf chases down some adventure games that were overlooked at E3 — and he has high hopes for the genre.

Let's face it — adventure fans are like orphans these days. As RPGs bask in the sunlight of a glorious renaissance, the pure-blood adventure genre has fallen by the wayside. Periodically, however, I like to re-educate the masses when it comes to one of the better, and least recognized, genres of computer games. Just because you haven't heard much about them, it doesn't mean adventure games are dead — far from it. This year's Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) had plenty of adventure games on display — here are just a few of them.

More Myst

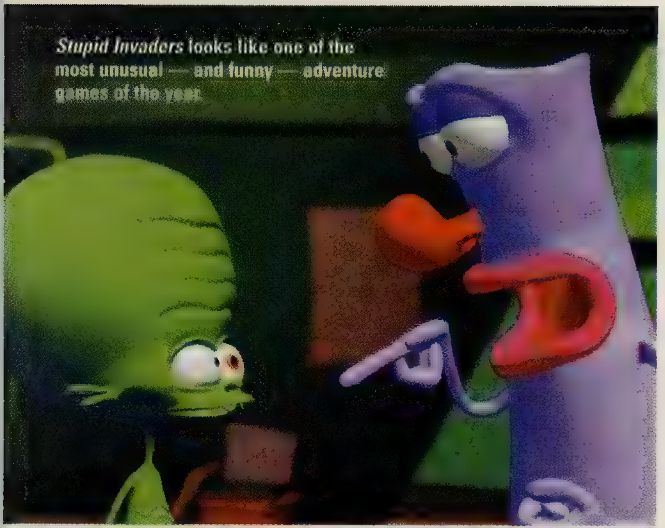
Granted, not too many hardcore gamers are fond of the original *Myst*. I thought the first game was fantastic — however, I hated the second in the series, *Riven*. Regardless, a third game is in the works: *Myst 3: Exile*. The game's storyline is shrouded in secrecy, but it will play very much like *Riven*, with pre-rendered backgrounds that will rotate 360 degrees around the player. Presto Studios, the developer of the *Myst*-alike Journeyman Project series (and recently responsible for the hogwash known as *Star Trek: Hidden Evil*, is working hard to frame it within the *Myst* mythology, and it will likely be just as mind-boggling as the previous two games. Additionally, Cyan (the original creators of *Myst*) is working on a new, full 3D version of the original game. Both products will be published by Mattel Interactive — *Myst 3* in early 2001, and the "dimensional" *Myst* in late 2000.

More Vampires

Nihilistic and Activision won't be the only makers of a vampire game this year — DreamCatcher has released *Dracula Resurrection*, reviewed on page 106 of this issue. The game uses beautiful pre-rendered backgrounds and 360-degree panoramas to tell a story that takes place seven years after the defeat of Dracula, as it's described in the original novel by Bram Stoker. It may not be a new idea, but it looks like a spine-tingling adventure nonetheless.

Welcome Back, Guybrush!

LucasArts' popular Monkey Island series is back and it's better than ever. *Escape from Monkey Island* pits Guybrush Threepwood against the pirate hordes again. This time, the game is in full 3D, but the insults, humor, and grog-swilling villains are just as dastardly. The game should be on store shelves this fall, and will likely have gamers swashbuckling long after its release.



Stupid Invaders looks like one of the most unusual — and funny — adventure games of the year.

So Stupid

Stupid Invaders is a strangely fitting title for this tongue-in-cheek space adventure game. Players control several colorful aliens as they attempt to avoid capture by the evil Dr. Sakarine. The 3D animation looks amazing (the developer, Gaumont Multimedia, has done animation work for *The Fifth Element*), and some of the voice actors will be familiar to fans of *Futurama*. The game is most certainly one of the most unusual titles I've seen, and it'll hit the PC, Mac, and Dreamcast very soon, courtesy of UbiSoft.

Arca What?

Arcatera looks like one of the more impressive adventure games coming down the line. The plot involves satanic cults and medieval environments — how can it go wrong? Players have only three weeks to stop the cult from overthrowing the city's prince, and the non-linear storyline will assure a new experience each time the game is played. Additionally, 120 NPCs react differently depending on the player's actions. The game has ten possible endings, and the simple mouse-driven interface will make it easy to play. Look for this one from UbiSoft in fall 2000.

Dracula Resurrection's spooky atmosphere will make it one of the scariest games of the year.

Adventures Live On

These games are just a very brief sampling of some of the games coming down the line. Other titles include *Alone in the Dark 4, Pompeii, Sea Dogs, The Time Machine, Devil Inside, The Real Neverending Story, Riddle of the Sphinx*, and *Simon the Sorcerer 3D*. And believe me, there are plenty more.

Not long ago, the roleplaying genre suffered a serious recession, and fans of the genre mourned the loss of RPGs. From what I saw at E3, some games classified in other genres are, at their heart, adventures. There's plenty of reason to think that the adventure game might just make a comeback to PC. They might be called "action/adventure" or "strategy/adventure," but they're adventure games nonetheless. Perhaps we'll see as big a flood of adventures as we've seen with RPGs.

Until then, the best site on the Web for the adventure game fan is Just Adventure (*www.justadventure.com*), a great resource for game news and previews and some exclusive content. Check it out — the adventurer in you will be glad you did. **PCG**

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Incoming!

The Colonel's mailbag is "horribly stuffed with epithets of war..." — Othello

Trotter got an earful after his last column, and is striking back.

My, my! That "grognard" column really stirred up a ruckus. Good. It was bloody well intended to. As I write this, on May 21, 2000, there are approximately 130 Usenet posts about the piece. About a third of them are defamatory attacks on my character, intelligence, and integrity (does that mean I win this year's "Derek Smart Award"?).

I expected nothing less. Here's a sampler of the debate, so readers who don't have time to dive into the online *moshlive.weber.net.ua* pit can at least get the gist of the controversy.

The lynch mob faction is led by an outspoken, shoot-from-the-lip, arch-grognard named...well, let's call him "Blitzkrieg." Mr. B. is also ranting about flaws in *Steel Panthers: World at War*, a game which he, like everyone else, received for *free*. And if anyone suggests that he is being churlish and ungrateful by doing so, he responds with an eloquent "Bite me!" or some similarly witty retort.

Blitzkrieg: "Trotter is roughly as bright as a 25-watt Bug Lite...My intestines are turning to water at the thought that some self-appointed sage who scribbles for a game magazine might get all hissy on me...BTW, does Trotter consider himself a 'grognard' anyway? Seems a relevant thing to determine. I'd say that he's not a purist, so that taints his credentials anyway...."

The Colonel: Discounting all my youthful years of toy-soldier collecting, I started wargaming in 1960, with Avalon Hill's *Gettysburg*, played hundreds of hours with a group of other boardgamers in college, subscribed to *Strategy & Tactics* during the 1970s, and started writing this column in 1989. Those are my credentials. Can I pretty please join the club?

As a respected military historian (some of whose books have drawn praise from the likes of John Eisenhower, Shelby Foote, and General John R. Galvin, former Supreme Commander Allied Forces in Europe), this author has demonstrated a passion for historical accuracy that ought to lend him a certain credibility vis-à-vis hardcore wargames, nicht wahr?

Blitzkrieg: "What's the argument being made here? If us grogs don't shaddup, we won't get to pay $50 for more click & twitch abortions like *Close Combat*? Well, boo-f******-hoo!" A few posts later, we heard from another grog who thinks Blitzkrieg is right-on: "Trotter's claimed 'temporary insanity' before (the *Ascendancy* strategy guide/review flap). Apparently, his 'monetary needs' outweigh his judgement fairly often...."

The Colonel: Sigh...not that hoary old canard about "all reviewers are on the take". If this accusation were not being made by someone who exhibits all the civility of a purple-assed baboon, I might be insulted. One more time for the record (even though conspiracy theorists won't believe it): the advertising and editorial divisions of Imagine Media (including *PC Gamer*) are totally separate. I have never been asked to compromise or tone-down any review in order to placate a "big advertiser."

On a much higher level of discourse, this thoughtful observation from "M.L.": "Trotter never said that we should all shut up about wargame releases that have 'laughable flaws' or 'blatant, flagrant errors.' The '100 jeeps destroying a Panther' argument, while technically true, was largely the result of a design decision, a decision which on the whole and in almost all cases produced historically accurate results."

"B.V.E." cut to the heart of the matter with admirable clarity: "It's easy to expect perfection when you personally don't have to produce the game. Having said that, I think it's important to have a good bug-fix pipeline."

This one puzzled me a bit: "Perhaps Mr. Trotter is just wetting himself because the schwerepunkt of PC wargaming has shifted from the major publishers (you know, who pay for big advertisements in game magazines that pay aging reviewers...) to smaller, leaner web-based concerns who couldn't care less what a glossy magazine thinks about their products."

You think? Well, this aging reviewer has devoted about half his columns in this glossy magazine, over the last three years, to encouraging and promoting the efforts of small, lean, independent wargame companies who could not afford to buy an ad in a high school yearbook.

Perhaps the most extreme comment was: "Frankly, rather than endorse the premise of Trotter and his ilk, I'd rather see wargames die than suffer ignominy."

Whether you agreed with it or hated it, the Grognard Column did at least spark a remarkably far-reaching discussion of some important issues. As one observer remarked: "I actually haven't seen this much support of and talk about wargames in a while. As long as folks are talking, that's a good thing in my book."

> "It's easy to expect perfection when you personally don't have to produce the game."

And in mine, good sir.

Of course, in a predictable and rather lovable demonstration of Usenet forum dynamics, a whole sub-thread evolved wherein dozens of people happily debated the burning issue of whether or not, in some places and under some circumstances, one hundred jeeps actually could destroy a Tiger tank!

Well, I'd like to stay and chat more, but my ilk is barking and I need to take him for a walk before he craps all over my study.

PCG

ANDY MAHOOD
simcolumn@pcgamer.com

Goodbye Wings, Hello Wheels

As flight sims dwindle, try the ground-based speed demons, complete with the complex physics tweaking you demand.

Complex user-created dashboards are becoming commonplace on the Internet for many of the top racing sims.

If there was one hard lesson to be learned at E3 this year, it's that combat flight sim fans are in for some lean times. Although the annual Electronic Entertainment Expo featured hundreds of new PC titles from scores of different publishers, the number of military aviation sims that were on tap could be counted on the fingers of one hand. As a matter of fact, after you were done counting the four hardcore flight sims that made it onto the show floor (*Combat Flight Simulator 2, IL-2 Sturmovik, B-17 2* and *Battle of Britain*), you would still have a middle digit free to wave in the general direction of mega-publishers like Hasbro and Havas who have chosen to pull their troops out of the flight sim business altogether.

Of course, there's really no one to blame but consumers, or lack thereof. We sim buffs have uniformly failed to convince the powers that be that hardcore flight titles represent a good return on their investment. We've been forced into a hibernation mode of sorts, and everyone's going to have to learn to stretch the limited resources we have left until the genre rebounds.

And how exactly does one go about doing this? Well, I guess that depends on just how specialized your simulation interests are. If you're like me, and you share an equal passion for both flight and racing sims, then you really don't have as much to worry about as you might think. Although flight sims are clearly on the decline, there has never been a better time to strap on the crash helmet and go racing. Driving sims are enjoying an unparalleled degree of popularity right now and deservedly so — the quality and fidelity of every new release seems to get better and better with each passing month.

> After you counted the four hardcore flight sims shown at E3, you would still have a middle digit free to wave in the direction of mega-publishers like Hasbro and Havas.

If you've been hunkered deep down in the cockpit of some F-16 Falcon or F/A-18E Hornet for the past year or so, then you owe it to yourself to check out some of the new racing sims coming to a PC near you. A few of these titles — like Havas/Sierra's *NASCAR Racing 4* and Hasbro/MicroProse's *Grand Prix 3* — were some of the major attractions at E3 this year and show no signs of falling off their parent company's radar screens like their airborne siblings.

Anyone who has read Tom Wolfe's *The Right Stuff* knows that, deep down, fighter jocks and test pilots are just a bunch of overgrown testosterone cases anyway. If you ground a real-life military flyboy for any length of time, you won't find them drowning their sorrows by writing letters or posting complaints to Usenet. They simply hop behind the wheel of some souped-up Corvette and terrorize the back roads around their local airbase until someone gives them a new plane to fly.

Thankfully, there's no shortage of quality racing sims to keep all of you grounded sim-pilots occupied. In addition to the aforementioned *NASCAR 4* and *GP3*, there are several other exciting current and pending racing titles to test-drive. Stock car or F1 racing not your style? Maybe Empire's upcoming *World Sports Cars* will be more to your liking. This promising West Racing-designed sim will feature a variety of Le Mans-type prototype machines and is expected to deliver some of the most sophisticated driving physics since *Grand Prix Legends*. EA's current *Need For Speed: Porsche Unleashed* and Ubi Soft's upcoming *F1 Racing Simulation 3* are some other heady contenders for your gaming dollars.

Granted, you may not be able to ventilate your AI or online competitors with a well-timed burst from your 20mm cannon, but the warm, fuzzy feeling that comes from beating a couple of dozen cars to the finish line is just as satisfying. If the prospect of losing all of those complex MFD and radar screens has got you down, then don't despair there either. The sophisticated car-tweaking menus found in leading race sims like *Grand Prix Legends* and *F1 2000* can be every bit as diverting.

The hardcore military flight sim market isn't likely to rise up like a phoenix anytime soon. Although I'm sure that a future E3 show will usher in some killer new aerial combat sim that will go on to sell a million copies and completely revitalize the genre, our current options are considerably more pragmatic. Take it from a former racer turned cyber-pilot: sim-jockeys with the right stuff can rule in the air *and* on the ground.

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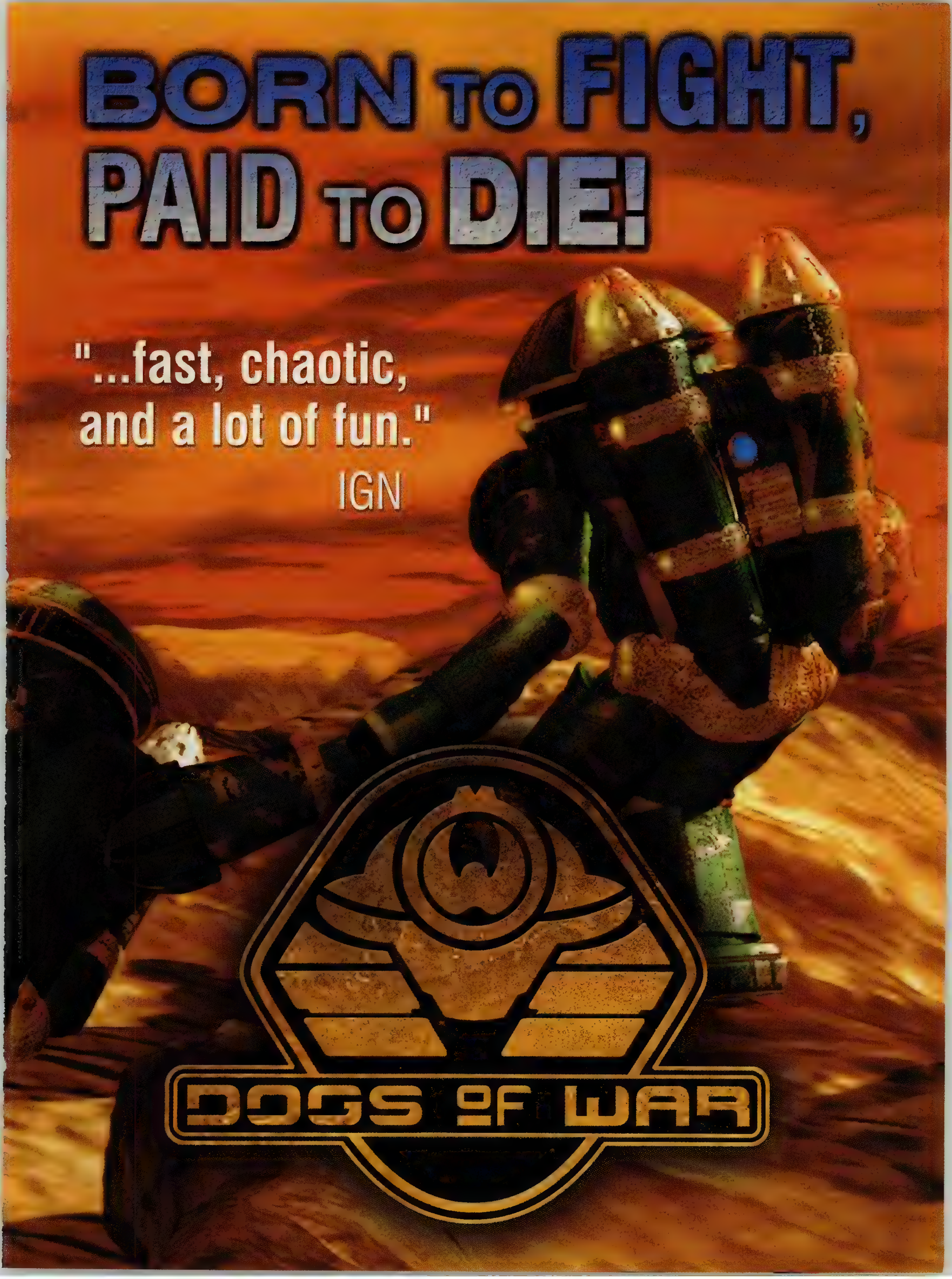
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IGN
DOGS OF WAR

Diablo II

Placing skills points in the wrong place at the beginning of your game can often lead to disaster later on. We learned this the hard way so you wouldn't have to. Here, we've crafted a strategy guide for those gamers new to *Diablo II* in the hope that it will inspire you to greatness. Party on!

— Rob Smith and Greg Vederman

AMAZON

A battle-ready character right from the word "go," the amazon is one of the easier classes to play. Though she can use just about any weapon in the game effectively, she's best with a spear or a bow, and that's what her skill tree focuses on. Pick either the bow or the spear and javelin at the start of your game and try to stick with it, since you don't want to squander skill points.

SKILL OPTIONS
(OR "HOW THEVEDE GOT IT DONE")

Jab: Without a doubt, this is one of the best skills when opting to specialize in spears. It gives you multiple hits per attack, and paired with a powerful spear, its effect can be devastating to even the most ferocious of creatures. By the time Greg defeated Diablo, he had placed about 10 skill points here. If you're careful, this is a skill that will get you all the way through the game in Normal mode as your primary attack.

Dodge: This is a passive skill, meaning that once you assign points, it works for you without any casting or triggering. By putting several points here, Greg had a higher than average chance of being able to move out of the way of melee attacks from enemies when he was standing still. Since he chose to specialize in spears, and he knew he would be right in the thick of things when fighting, this was a very useful defense mechanism for him to have.

Avoid: This is another passive skill; adding points to Avoid gives you a better chance of being able to move out of the way of missile attacks when standing still. As Greg did with Dodge, he put several points here throughout Act II, and was super happy that he did, especially when he got to Act III, where little evil bastards were constantly shooting blow darts at me. As Greg moves into Nightmare mode, his plan is to put several more points into this skill since the enemies that shoot missiles tend to be the biggest pain for him.

ARMOR AND WEAPONS

With a bit of careful attribute building here and there, the amazon can use just about any manner of armor she pleases. To do this, you're going to need to spend some extra points in Strength and Dexterity to make sure you meet the prerequisite requirements for the better gear.

Be sure to supplement that with a quality spear or javelin (or a bow if you're going the missile route).

WHAT TO BUY
IN THE BEGINNING TO GET YOU STARTED

With the Amazon, there's not a lot of immediate danger of being killed straight away. You're going to want to get some good, basic armor as soon as possible. Depending on what skills you pick, finding armor and rings that add mana will help you immensely throughout the game — especially if you'd like to roleplay a stronger character that requires more points added to strength. If you want, you should be able to wield two-handed weapons at the start of the game without worrying about needing a shield.

With a specialization in spears, you should be able to take on just about any enemy that comes your way.

Exploring all the small structures in Act III will give you the opportunity to find a lot more treasure chests filled with goodies.

BARBARIAN

The barbarian is the strongest fighter in the game. You're not going to have any magic to speak of, and almost all of your skills have to do with bettering your abilities with various types of hand-to-hand weapons. Though this character kicks ass no matter what weapon he's using, it's better to pick a weapon or two that you like, stick with them, and focus your skill points there.

SKILL OPTIONS

Axe Mastery/Sword Mastery: These passive skills cost no mana, and the skill does not have to be selected to be in use. Adding a few points here early in the game will allow you to do a lot more damage than you'd ordinarily inflict when using either an axe or sword. Go for both masteries to spread your options when fun new weapons appear later in the game.

Double Swing: Definitely the coolest looking of the barbarian's early skills, this skill lets you wield a weapon in each hand so you can do damage to two nearby enemies in a single attack. Like the masteries, place at least two or three points here as soon as you're able, and you'll be amazed at how much faster you take out your foes.

Find Potion: To save all those treks back to town to stock up on supplies, adding points to this skill increases the chance that you'll be able to find potions on the bodies of your slain enemies. Place two or three points here only after the previous three skills have been developed.

ARMOR AND WEAPONS

If you like all the variety of armor and weapons that *Diablo II* offers, you're going to be very glad that you picked the barbarian. Since you'll be putting many of your points when leveling into strength and dexterity, you're going to be able to use just about anything you can afford. Also, since you're going to be up close and personal with the baddies in the game, it's always a great idea to find strong armor that gives you some immunity to magic fire, ice, and poison attacks. Don't be afraid to forgo a shield if you're using two weapons at the same time, or if you find a great double-handed weapon.

WHAT TO BUY

You're in a unique position at the start of the game. You're strong enough to kill with impunity, and you're pretty hard to kill. Buy the weapons and armor you fancy as you find them.

If you play as the barbarian, you'll be able to use just about any weapon effectively.

THE GEAR AMAZON "MRS. VERDERMAN" USED TO SEND DIABLO PACKING

KNIGHT'S PIKE
Two-handed Damage: 24-101
Durability: 25 of 25
Required Dexterity: 45
Required Strength: 60
Required Level: 18
Spear Class - slow attack speed
Enhanced Damage
+88 to attack rating

SIGON'S GAGE GAUNTLETS*
Defense: 13
Durability: 48 of 48
Required Strength: 60
Required Level: 6
+20 to attack rating
+10 to strength

VIPER COIL RING
Required Level: 13
Fast Cast Rate
+7 to light radius
Cold Resist 21%
Fire Resist 9%
+8 to dexterity

GARNET GOTHIC PLATE OF THE TIGER
Defense: 133
Durability: 55 of 55
Required Strength: 70
Required Level: 15
Fire Resist 24%
+24 to life

CROWN OF THE TIGER
Defense: 42
Durability: 50 of 50
Required Strength: 55
Required Level: 15
+27 to life

SNAKE'S AMULET OF THE BAT
Required Level: 4
7% mana stolen per hit
+9 to mana

JADE CHAIN BOOTS
Defense: 8
Durability: 16 of 16
Required Strength: 30
Required Level: 9
Poison Resist: 14%

RUGGED RING OF THE BAT
Required Level: 10
4% mana stolen per hit
+7 maximum stamina

DEATH'S GUARD SASH*
Defense: 22
Durability: 24 of 24
Required Level: 6
Cannot be frozen
+20 to defense

* Green items are "set items". See review on page 74 for details.

SORCERESS

As with all spellcasters, the early game is tough. While spell power is weak, and mana is limited, it's best to stay outdoors for as long as possible where it's easy to run from trouble. Against powerful monsters, keep running around them in a large circle, pegging them with Fire Bolts. You can keep this tactic going for a while.

SKILL OPTIONS

Lightning: It's worthwhile to focus on two of the three skill sets. Make Lightning one of them to gain the option of offensive and defensive skills, and then choose either Fire or Cold as the other skill.

Fire Bolt: You can't go wrong with pounding points in to this option. In outdoor areas, just be careful of where you're pointing it. Since you'll be attacking monsters from range, one miss can be fatal. Of course, upgrade this to Fire Ball as soon as you get the chance.

Warmth: Since mana is everything to the sorceress, steadily infusing this skill with a few points will certainly pay off over time.

Charged Bolt: The multiple bolts of this spell make it incredibly useful early on. Combo this spell with the Fire Bolt, targeting the most powerful creature with the bolt, and hitting other enemies with the lightning attacks.

Teleport: This is a lifesaver. Through Acts II and III, the sheer number of creatures can be totally overwhelming. When you're staring death in the face, teleport to a clearing, get a town portal out as fast as possible, and flee.

Frozen Armor: Since you'll have to fight melee combat, use the Frozen Armor to help out. If it freezes a monster, use the delay to get out if you're being overrun.

Mastery: It's easy to overlook the mastery spells since they don't appear to offer immediate benefits, but by steadily improving your spell's damage or duration, combats can be resolved quicker.

Just because you're a magic user doesn't mean you can't use any weapons. Staves will often come in handy.

ARMOR AND WEAPONS

Have a staff that offers magic resistance or extra skill points to certain spells rather than one that may have a better attack rating or offer a few extra points of damage per hit. All armor and weapon decisions should be focused on improving your mana amount, your recovery speed, and your skill enhancement.

WHAT TO BUY

A lot of health and mana potions! Also, grab any armor and wands that you can use effectively.

LEVELING UP

Taking the most direct route to Diablo in the single-player game may cause more frustration than joy. Why? Because killing the big guy requires mucho power, and if you're not ready for the task, the corpse retrievals will drive you nuts. There are a few dungeons such as Hole in Act I that provide a couple of levels that don't take long to clear and hide cash and treasure.

Another dungeon in Act II is a medium-sized slaughter-fest that'll strengthen you, while not being part of any particular quest. But, by far, the best place to hang for a while and power level in this Act is in the desert. While on the hunt to find and kill Tal Rasha, you're going to find many fake entrances into his tomb, all providing more experience acquisition opportunities. A good rule of thumb is that, unless you're really impatient, try to clear out as many of the non-quest dungeons as possible in the game in order to reap the money, treasure, and experience that you'll need for the boss encounters.

DIABLO COLLECTIBLES

>>> D&D DIABLO II

If you're looking for some real strategy, you may be interested to know that Wizards of the Coast has recently released a tabletop RPG version of *Diablo II* using the D&D rule set. No computer is required; this game plays much like any other pen and paper RPG, except the characters you have to choose from and the monsters you fight are all your favorite's from *Diablo II*. At $17.99 it's a steal — even if you're like us, and aren't going to play it but want to put it up in your collection of Diablo gear.

Dungeons&Dragons

>>> DIABLO II COLLECTOR'S EDITION

Of course, if you're a serious collector, you might just want to cough up the extra dough and reserve yourself a copy of the Collector's Edition version of *Diablo II*. It includes the Wizards of the Coast game as well as a DVD-ROM that contains, in wide-screen letterbox format, all 24 minutes worth of the game's cinematics and a CD containing 70 minutes of all your favorite music from *Diablo II*. As if that weren't enough, the development team will also sign the manual that will ship in this package. If you want the Collector's Edition, and you haven't already pre-ordered, they're going to be difficult to find, but well worth the extra money if you're a fan-boy like many of us around the office.

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PALADIN

Perfect for the player that mostly wants to hack and slash, but who also gets a kick from magic, the Paladin is one of the more exciting characters. He's not as strong as the Barbarian at the start, but he's very good at using a variety of different weapons. We've even seen one doing quite well with a bow as his primary weapon throughout a good portion of the game!

SKILL OPTIONS

Might: In the beta, Greg poured almost all of his points into this one skill. By the end of his days in Act I, his character was inflicting something close to 250 percent damage with every weapon he used — not to mention any special abilities that his weapons themselves yielded. You might not want to be as excessive as he was here, but adding several points is a great way to beef-up your character in the early game. Plus, if you're partying with friends that are playing weaker characters — like the necromancer and sorceress — the range effect of a paladin's auras will benefit them, too.

Zeal: Similar to skills used by the amazon and barbarian, when you're in a tight squeeze, sandwiched between a ton of enemies, you're going to be glad that you put a few points in here since you'll be able to inflict damage on many of them in a single attack. Put a couple of points here to start out.

Prayer: A great one if you're planning on adventuring with your friends, this one will really help the weaker characters in the game keep up in fierce battles. It'll also help you out in a pinch as long as you can run to safety while your wounds heal.

Resistances: The further into the game you get, the more you'll be fried by magical attacks. As a general rule, it's a good idea to add points into Resist Fire, Resist Cold, and Resist Lightning. And since enemies in a given area are likely to only be throwing one type of magic at you at a time — at least relatively early-on in the game — the fact that you can only use one of these auras at a time shouldn't create too many problems.

The Paladin is a well-balanced character — he's a strong fighter and can use some powerful magic.

ARMOR AND WEAPONS

Like the barbarian, you can use just about anything you want! Early in the game, you may want a shield and single-handed weapon, but after you've leveled up a few times, moving to a meaty dual-handed weapon shouldn't be a problem, since you're likely to have decent armor by then.

WHAT TO BUY

Go nuts! You're lean, you're mean, you're a fighting machine! Just look for good, high-quality items, and you should be fine through most of the game. You don't really need to focus here on any one thing, though as the paladin, you're going to want to check out some of the melee weapons that have been created just for you — though you shouldn't feel that you need to only use those types of weapons.

The Paladin is so well-rounded that he's effective even when using a bow and arrow.

WHAT COLOR IS YOUR AURA?

HOW A GROUP OF AURA-USING PALADINS COULD TAKE OVER THE WORLD

Take three of your buddies onto Battle.net and have them create paladin characters, then you do the same. Now, with every level you gain, each member should focus on adding more and more points to only one of the better, early aura skills. You build up Might, and then each of the other guys should take one of the three Resistances. As long as you all stay together, and always play together, there's no way you can lose! You'll be invincible! Well, perhaps not, but you'll be a pretty damn powerful group of (very good, law-abiding) bad-asses....

NECROMANCER
The Necromancer is the toughest of all the classes to develop effectively, and the assigning of every skill point is vital. It will take you a while to get the hang of playing to his strengths. Where some of the other classes may allow you to defeat Diablo around level 24 or 25, you should really be looking at level 27 or higher before trying to take on the big guy.

SKILL OPTIONS

Create Skeleton: Creating an army of skeletal help is appealing in the early levels of the game. However, by the time you're midway through Act II, this undead army's effectiveness becomes pretty limited (especially if you don't enhance their powers with Skeleton Mastery). Putting about three points here and two points in Mastery should be enough.

Bone Armor: When the opportunity arises, start putting points in here if you plan on getting down and dirty with melee combat. Keep this spell selected in mass melees to ensure you maintain its protection.

Corpse Explosion: Start pounding points in to this awesome skill as soon as humanly possible. Not only is it the most visually appealing (watching corpses blow up in a cloud of gibs is a beautiful sight, and never gets old). In melee, make sure that you kill the most powerful creature first. Since the power of Corpse Explosion is dependent upon the power of the dead creature, you can often take out several of a leaders' cohorts at once.

Create Golem: Pouring points in to Golems and Golem Boost is more effective through Act II when they can supply corpses in melee for you to explode.

Teeth plus Corpse Explosion: This appealing low-level option can suck a load of points in the early game. Only go this route if you decide you need a range attack, but Create Skeleton or Bone Armor is more useful overall. In some later levels, use a range attack to kill one creature, then explode it to damage others.

Curses: In general, put points in the various curses only if you're going to play a stealthy role. Dim Vision and Confuse are certainly useful, but the magic resistance of higher-level monsters limits their effectiveness, but can be extremely helpful in chaotic melees.

ARMOR AND WEAPONS

It's always tempting as a melee-based character to go for the big two-handed weapon with all its lovely, lovely damage. Don't. Unless that weapon offers a range of immunities or protection magic, the necromancer needs all the defense it can get, so stick with powerful single-handed weapons (like the two-headed axe) and a meaty shield.

WHAT TO BUY

Armor is your first priority. Invest in, or make sure you keep, a suit of armor that offers magic resistance and other protection benefits. This can be worth sacrificing a few extra defense points overall (supplanted by Bone Armor points) when you have to make those tough decisions between sticking with your magical Ring Mail tunic (around 60 defense, with benefits) and that superior quality non-magic Splint Mail tempting you with its 90 defense rating.

If you think there's a chance of dying in battle, open a town portal ahead of time.

ROB SMITH'S "HOLY CRAP!" MOMENT

There I was, making speedy progress through the early parts of Act II, as my necromancer (indulgently named Ee-eye-cee) was getting to grips with the one-two punch of the Golem ally and the mass destruction potential of Corpse Explosion. Then I died (in the Arcane Strangeway) trying to run from what seemed like hell's entire population of devil-kind. Given the narrow constraints of the level's corridors, coupled with the central waypoint location, rescuing my corpse took hours — 35 to 40 further deaths, in fact.

Why? Well, partly it was my own fault for having wasted some early skill points on Teeth that was pretty useless in this situation when I needed defense. Even my Golem cohort turned out to be a liability, trapping me in death's grasp as the hordes of hell sucked the life from that little red vial with frightening speed. This particular instance relied on my taking a few deaths for the greater good — I appeared at the waypoint to be greeted by monsters galore. I ran in the opposite direction to my corpse, drawing all those creatures away. Naturally, I died. Next time, I'd appear in that central location and make a mad dash for life. There was but one option: grab the loot from my corpse and Town Portal the hell out.

What this criminal exercise is frustration taught was that skill selection is vital. Understand your character's weaknesses and build the skills to balance them out.

Here I am, thinking I'm all bad-ass — little do I know that my death is right around the corner.

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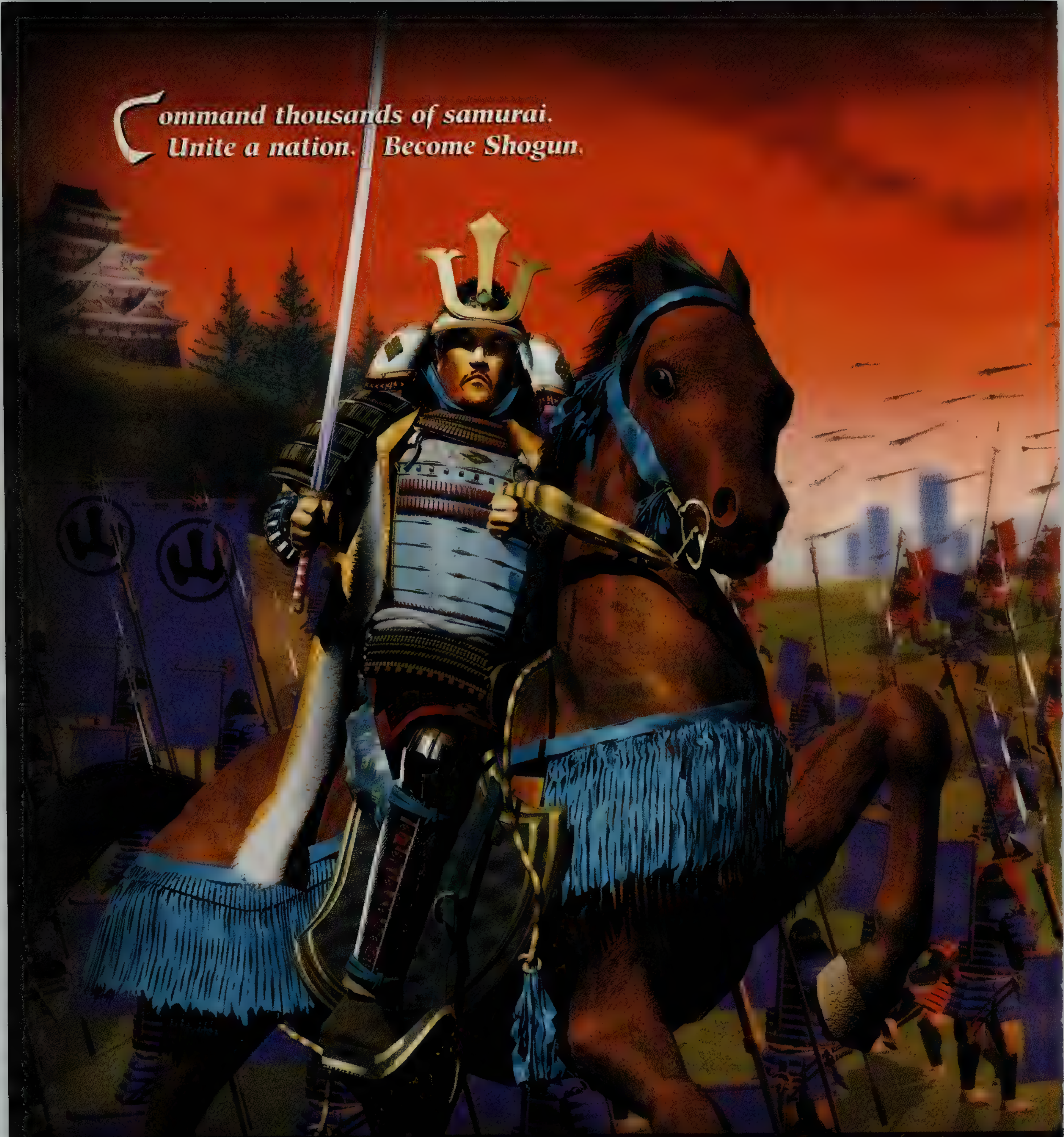

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Microprose (Action)
Release: 8/00
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$38.95

'ONI' is a third-person 3D action/adventure that emphasizes hand-to-hand combat & gunplay. Set in the year 2032, you play Konoko, an elite agent on a quest to infiltrate and destroy a ruthless crime syndicate. Missions can be completed through stealth or brawn.

Bungie (Action)
Release:10/00
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$42.95

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Title	Release	Price
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Eidos (Action)
Release: 6/00
PC CD
$28.95

JOHN ROMERO'S
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Journeyman Project 2	07/95	$28.95
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Microprose (Simulation)
Release: 9/00
PC CD
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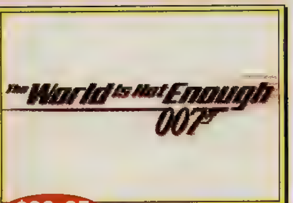

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EA (Shooter)
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Eidos (Strategy)
Release: 11/00
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$32.95

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GOD (Strategy)
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Title	Release	Price
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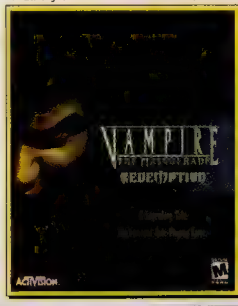

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Activision (Roleplaying)
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Interplay (Roleplaying)
Release: 6/00
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Daikatana

So you think you're ready to step into the combat boots of Hiro Miyamoto, and unleash an ass-whooping of biblical proportions on the evil tyrant Osaka Mishima? It ain't gonna be easy, pal — that's why we've decided to give you some extra tips and tricks for slogging your way through the epic *Daikatana*. Gear up, kids, and get ready to hit the mean streets!

Reserve beefy weapons, like the Sidewinder, for these metallic monsters.

Using the Shotcycler on human opponents is overkill. In one-on-one situations, use the ION Ripper.

EPISODE 1

>> KYOTO

In the future, Kyoto's beautiful landscape will be transformed into an environment that looks like *Quake II* — and worst of all, it'll be teeming with frogs, bugs, and "battle boars." This episode lets you get used to *Daikatana*'s gameplay formula, which is tossing tons of identical enemies at you until you kill them all or go insane. Remember to stash some ammo for the more powerful weapons in order to deal with hideous mutant creatures in the final level.

WEAPONS

>> Disruptor Glove

Despite years of martial arts training, Hiro's fists do essentially jack squat when paired up against any enemies of reasonable toughness. This mode of attack should only be used underwater.

>> Ion Ripper

The designer of the Ion Ripper obviously favored form over function — though this weapon sends out a shard of pretty-looking green light, its tendency to bounce around tight quarters and smack you in the face is a major strike against it. On the other hand, its quick reload times and one-shot frog-killing abilities make it a handy standby. Oh, and don't fire this beast underwater — you'll wind up in tiny pieces.

>> C4 Vizatergo

If you want to clear out a room in quick and efficient fashion, a package of C4 is always the best way to go. The C4 will detonate when enemies are detected nearby — or if you carelessly step on a package of the stuff. If necessary, you can clear them out of the way by shooting the C4 with another weapon.

>> Sidewinder

The equivalent to the Quake rocket launcher — but this puppy spits out two projectiles at once. When both of them collide with an enemy, it results in a bubble explosion that should liquefy anything within two meters. Use two shots (a total of four rockets) per security robot.

>> Shotcycler-6

A weapon that truly redefines "overkill," the Shotcycler-6 will send a total of six bullets into your enemy's body. While powerful against larger robots you'll encounter later in the episode, this weapon's ammo-sucking properties make for rare usage. Don't forget about the recoil — if you're standing on a ledge, you may get knocked off.

>> Shockwave

With a 1.75 second warm-up time, the Shockwave is a slow-firing device — but one blast will clear an auditorium. This weapon discharges a metallic ball that explodes into spiraling blue shockwaves of insta-gibbing energy. Therefore, firing and running like hell is a great idea — and make sure your teammates are out of the way before you let 'er rip.

Despite the fact that these skeleton warriors are undead, they're still susceptible to poison.

EPISODE 2

>> GREECE

It's "Jason and the Argonauts" time, as Hiro and friends take on countless swarms of evil skeletons and Grecian guards who aren't too appreciative of the intrusion. Most of the enemies you'll encounter here rely on melee weapons — keep some distance, and you should be relatively safe. This is a good place to get comfortable with the Discus, and let your partners do some long-range head-bashing as well. There's not much of a secret to beating the end-level boss, Medusa — just be sure to collect the poison on the second floor of the battle arena, and keep hammering away until she ain't no mo'.

■ WEAPONS

>> Daikatana

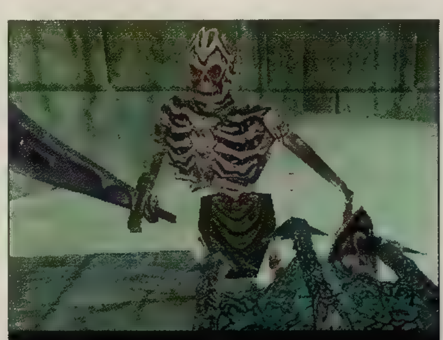
Your brand-new stand-by weapon. If you're serious about melee combat, you'll want to fight with the Daikatana whenever possible, because when you use it, it gains experience points that slowly boost its performance over the course of the game. On the other hand, the Daikatana's attacks are limited, slow, and clunky during the sword's infancy.

>> Discus of Daedalus

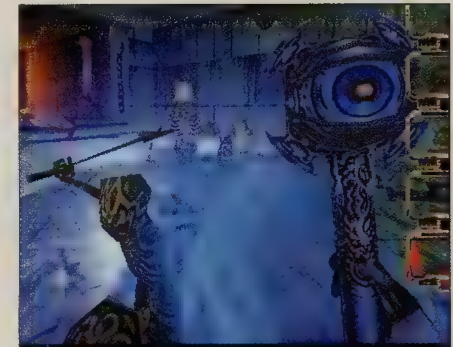
With unlimited ammo, this weapon is one of the most versatile in the armament canon. Pressing the fire button unleashes a large disc, which conks your enemy in the forehead and returns itself to you. Don't worry about the disc getting lost — it'll always find its way back to you, even if you miss your enemy by a mile. Best of all, you can switch to other weapons while the disc is still looking for necks to slice.

>> Venomous

The *Daikatana* equivalent to *Unreal's* BioRifle, this weapon shoots chunks of goo that bounce off walls and stick to the



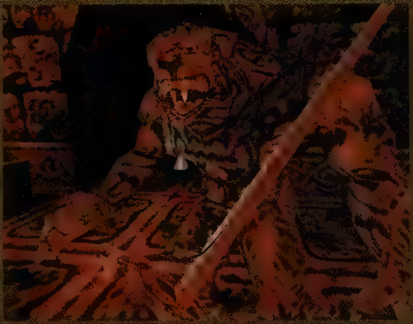
The mighty power of the Trident is about to wipe the dumb look off that skeleton's face.



Few can withstand the power of the Eye of Zeus.

CHEATER'S CORNER

>>> DAIKATANA



Find the shortcut icon to *Daikatana* and right-click on it. Go to the properties tab and add "+set console 1" to the end of the command line. Basically, it should look just like this when you're done:

"C:\daikatana\daikatan.exe +set console 1"

Remember that the directories may be different on your computer so make sure that you have the right one. Now when you're in the game, hit ~ to get into the console and type in any of the following cheats:

cheats 1 — Turn on cheat mode
god — Invincible
noclip — Turns off clipping
give_all_weapons — Gives you all the weapons
giveall — Gives you everything
weapon_Give_# — gives you a specific weapon (put a number where the # is)
notarget — Enemies don't attack you
health — Restores health

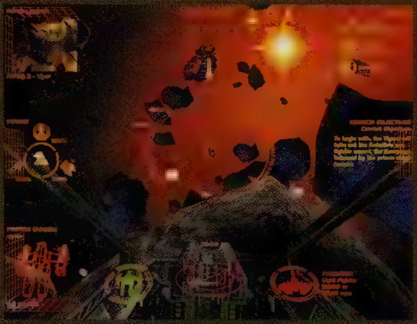
>>> ALIENS VS. PREDATOR GOLD EDITION

Once again, find the shortcut to the game, right-click on it and go to the properties tab. Add "-debug" to the end of the command line for the game. Now you can bring up the console during the game by hitting the ~ key. Then, input any of these codes (they must be typed in all caps):

GIMME_CHARGE — Replenishes Predator energy
GOD — Invincibility
GIVEALLWEAPONS — All guns and full ammo
CROUCHMODE1 — You can now toggle alien crouch
LIGHT — Surrounds player with light
SHOWFPS — Displays framerate

CHEATER'S CORNER

>>> STARLANCER



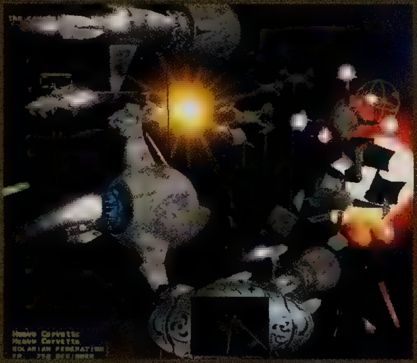
Select Levels — At the main menu, hold CTRL and type in "potatoe". You will see an "M" appear in the top left corner of the screen. Next, type the number of the mission you want to skip to and press CTRL and ENTER at the same time.

>>> CODENAME: EAGLE

Hit ALT+S during the game and type in the following codes to activate the cheats:

armorgod — Gives 200 percent armor
weaponmaster — Gives all weapons
itemgod — Gives all items
codenamegod — Turns on god mode

>>> IMPERIUM GALACTICA II: ALLIANCES



Type "LISTENUPEVERYBODY!" at the main menu, then type in the following codes during the game to activate the cheats:

ghettoblaster — Get all ships
shootem' — Get all weapons
dienodie — Turn on god mode

ground. Obviously, you shouldn't step on those chunks, or else you'll be poisoned. If you run out of ammo, you can continue to bludgeon your opponents to death at close-range with the weapon itself, which keeps spitting poisonous clouds.

>> Greek Fire

These weapons serve a double purpose — they give off light when held, and make a major explosion when thrown. One of these can ignite a small area for around five seconds, dooming any enemies who foolishly wander into the blaze.

>> Hades Hammer

This short-range melee weapon is great for decimating swarms of skeletons, or other quick-moving enemies that horde around your persona. If you're serious about doing any damage, you'll need to hold down the fire button for three seconds to charge it up, then let go to unleash a heavy shockwave. Another added bonus is its jumping ability — charge, let go, and you'll be sent flying into the air. Use this to get to higher positions for extra goodies.

>> Trident

Unleashes a horizontal row of three plasma bursts. Attack power is heavy, but the firing rate is a bit slow. It's also an ammo hog, using three units per shot.

>> Eye of Zeus

The ancient Grecian equivalent to the BFG9000, the Eye of Zeus unleashes a ray of blue death on any nearby enemies. This takes a few seconds to charge up, and you can only carry two shots at any given time, so make 'em count.

EPISODE 3

>> THE DARK AGES

When the plague strikes, it's best to stock up on Tylenol and take a vacation. Sadly, Hiro and crew have been thrust into the middle of the Dark Ages, where pestilence is wreaking havoc with the local populous. Thanks to an overabundance of rats, bats, and other quick-moving enemies, you'll need to pound through this series of levels more carefully — the majority of baddies will be able to poison you with a single bite. Again, remember to hold back some ammo for the final boss, who doesn't require a lot of trickery to beat — just a whole lotta firepower.

■ **WEAPONS**

>> Silverclaw

This close-up melee weapon is another throwaway — its quick slashes do little damage on real monsters, and the retro styling makes you look like a wanna-be GWAR member. Overlook this one in favor of the Daikatana.

>> Bolter

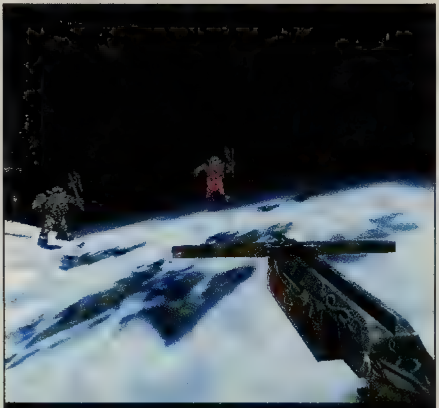
Despite the lack of tactile oomph, this powered crossbow will nail slow-moving enemies with precision. Quick reloads make this one handy when dealing with plague-ridden humans, though attempting to shoot down bats is near-nigh impossible.

>> Stavro's Stave

Aside from being the most phallic weapon in the history of computer gaming, the Stave shoots a large lava meteor, which breaks up into a half-dozen chunks and blasts the hell out of anything in the relative vicinity. Outstanding when dealing with large groups of ground-based enemies, but make sure your sidekicks are far, far away before unleashing this monster.

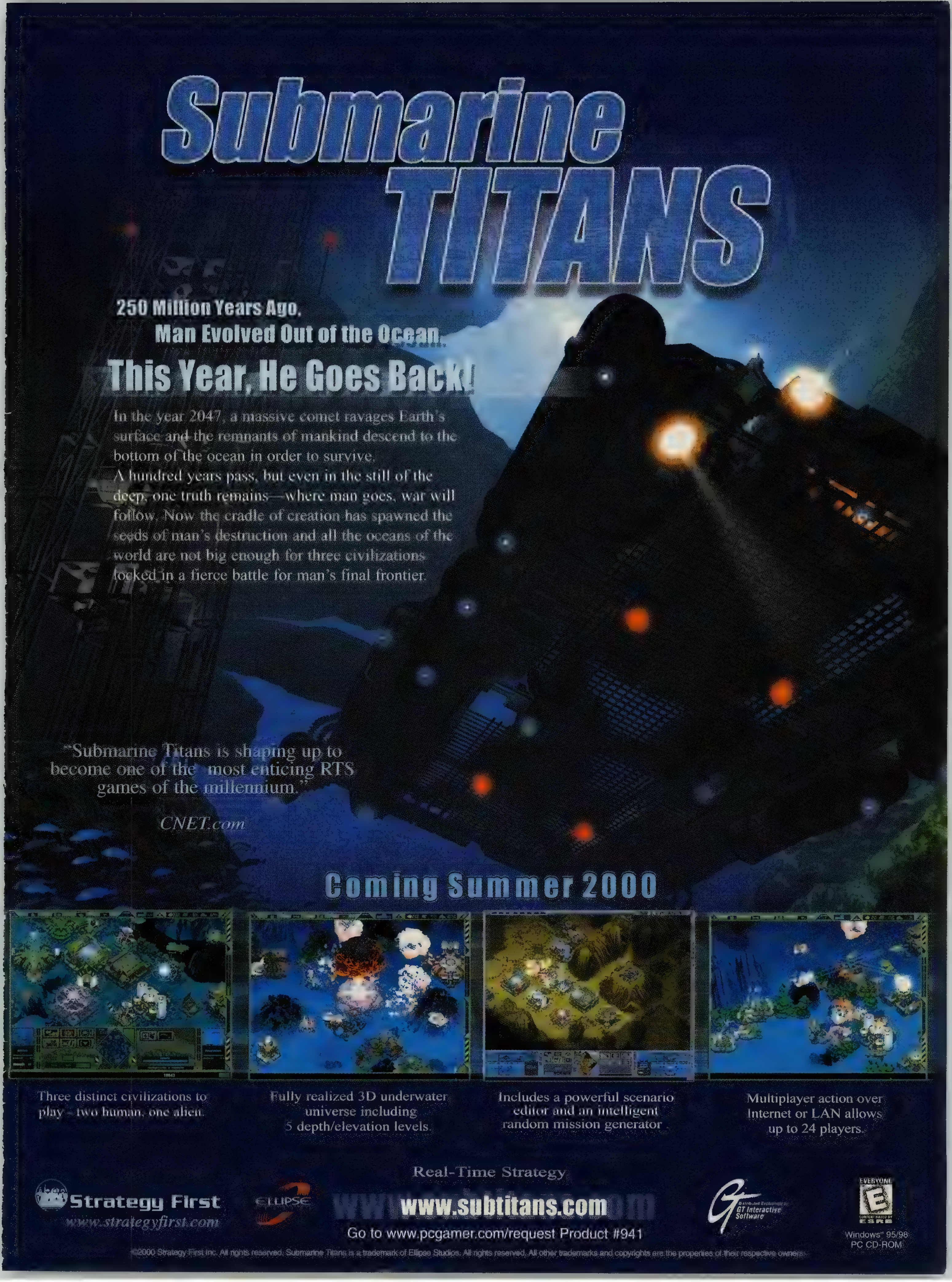
>> Ballista

This high-powered crossbow tosses an exploding lumber grenade that sends shards of wood pounding into nearby baddies. Despite a nasty case of splinters for the end-user, this is the medieval equivalent to the cluster grenade.



These stocky dwarves are about to be deadmeat thanks to the tiny, yet destructive, bolter.

Summoning a demon is one of *Daikatana*'s few thrills — this archer doesn't stand a chance.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Now you can re-enact them thar cityfolks' favorite pastime: shooting giant rats with a Glock.

Mikiko is cool, calm, and collected — she's not shocked when a person is liquefied in front of her.

Daikatana's enemies don't seem to mind being shot in the chest with a shoulder-mounted laser cannon.

>> Wyndrax's Wysp

Here's another weapon that should be used with extreme caution. This staff fires a ball of electricity, which floats about and ravages anything in range via nasty bolts of electricity.

>> Nharre's Nightmare

Press the button and run. After drawing a pentagram in the air, this weapon summons a large demon from the pits of hell who proceeds to rip the life out of anyone in close range. Unfortunately, the demon occasionally forgets what he's doing and just sits there. Though the damage dealt out is effective, it's obnoxiously slow — and you can't switch to other weapons while the demon does his thang.

EPISODE 4

>> SAN FRANCISCO

This is the episode that pulls out all the stops, delivering hordes of tough human opponents, and the ever-dreaded jumping puzzles in the SEAL training base. And — joy of joys — you'll need to keep stockpiling weaponry up for not one, but two boss battles. If you plan on using the Daikatana against the final boss...don't. No matter how much you've charged it up over the course of the game, taking on the warlord Mishima with the Daikatana is like attacking a grizzly bear with a toothpick. Don't bother — you've been warned.

■ WEAPONS

>> Glock

Despite the Glock's popularity with today's inner-city urban warrior, its future incarnations are a bit weak — it'll take a good handful of shots to drop a human enemy with it. Go for one of the more powerful weapons, and save this for the mutant rats.

>> Slugger

The slugger is essentially a mini-shotgun — and unlike the Shotcycler, it only uses one unit of ammo per shot. There's a bigger scatter factor than the Glock, with a larger payoff and a compromised, slower reload time.

>> Kineticore

Similar to the Ion Blaster, the Kineticore is a "bouncy" gun that lets you carom shots at baddies. Any shots that connect will do major damage, too — the freezing effect will whittle at an opponent's life for several seconds. Just like the Ion Blaster, hitting yourself with the gun is not good.

>> Ripgun

A tribute to the *Wolfenstein 3D* chaingun, the Ripgun is an ammo-sucking monster that will drop enemy hordes — and run out of ammo after a few good bursts. Use this conservatively, and save up the scarce ammo for the big bosses.

>> Novabeam

The Novabeam fires a straight beam of raw laser death that spells misfortune for anyone in its path. This weapon's operation is cut-and-dry: throw an enemy in the crosshairs, and fire away; just keep tabs on the ammo count, which can drain fast.

>> Metamaser

Metamasers are sentry weapons that will rip apart anything within a few meters' radius. If you're in the midst of an enemy gang-bang, let one of these loose and run like the dickens. One more thing: make sure your sidekicks aren't in the relative vicinity, or accidental casualties could spell game over for your sorry self. PCG

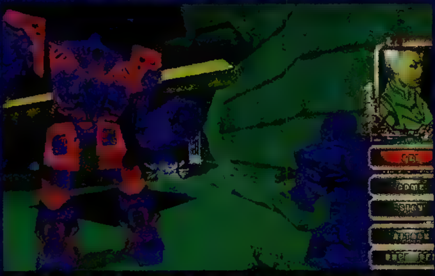
STAYING ALIVE USING YOUR SIDEKICKS

Daikatana's big contribution to the first-person shooter market — aside from copious amounts of robot frogs — is the addition of two handy AI sidekicks who fight by your side, and offer snappy repartee whenever appropriate. Unfortunately, they seem to be a bit dimwitted, and will get themselves killed at the most inopportune times. The secret to success is viewing your buddies as fragile but powerful units in a RTS game. In other words, you'll need to keep tabs on their progress at all times. Here's how to make it through the game with your friends intact:

USE KEYBOARD BINDINGS
You can issue five commands via a heads-up display — but in the heat of battle, you'll want to have them bound to separate keys for optimum speed.

SCOUT AHEAD
The last thing you want to do is enter a room packed with baddies, and have your friends dive into a re-enactment of Custer's Last Stand. The best strategy is to lure enemies toward your party's location. To do this, tell both sidekicks to stay put via the "stay" command, then enter the suspected enemy-infested area. After you've been spotted, quickly run back to where you planted Superfly and Mikiko — the enemy should give chase right into your trap.

BE GENEROUS
The "Get" command is the most helpful of them all — walk up to any object your sidekick may need, and tap the key you've assigned to "Get." If they need it, they'll pick it up. Remember that as a rule, sidekicks won't pick up stuff unless you tell them to — and if you don't do anything, they'll be attacking bad guys with their fists alone until the cows come home.



You have to take care of your sidekicks. Superfly Johnson can help you take out the trash.

BE WARY OF DOORS
I've seen a brainless Superfly get squashed by a simple rotating door, and babysitting is a necessity when maneuvering through some hallways. Give them their props. To be honest, their aim is probably a lot better than yours — allocate them plenty of long-range, bullet-based weapons, and their accuracy should pay off.

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Innovate or Die!

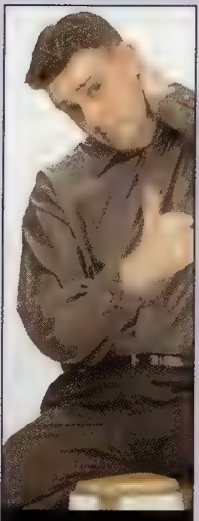
Just like everyone else, I am getting sick of playing the same old games in new packaging. Why do we need so many damn first-person shooters on the market? Isn't one good enough? You would think that more developers would try to strike out on their own and really blow everyone away with new concepts and not just stupid gimmicks like having better lens flares or a few more modes of play than the next guy.

Fortunately, it looks like we are heading into a great time for gaming once again. New technology is opening new horizons for game developers. With breakthrough titles such as *Halo* and *Black & White*, which both have new concepts and will probably be polished final products, PC gamers like myself will be happy once again. I guess what I'm trying to say is that more developers need to jump off the bandwagon and get cracking on some awesome new ideas.

— **Blair Baskin**, via the Internet

We couldn't agree with you more, Blair. If you take a look at our super-sized scoop section on page 15, you'll see that the games we focused on are the ones that, for the most part, are bringing something new and exciting to the table. We do feel there's room for many games in a genre, as long as they all try and do something different.

The Babes Love "The Vede"



Greg Vederman — "Almost doable".

As the thirty-nine- (not, grant me patience, thirty-something) year old mother of a thirteen year old gamer, I feel compelled to defend Mr. Vederman lest you perceive intolerance to be the hallmark of over-thirty parents. First, there is a vast difference between referring to pornography and pornography itself. Second, while I find such references a tad silly, I realize you are trying to be entertaining to a wide range of ages and interests. Finally, these references to porn are never the point Mr. Vederman's writing; they are obviously just "color" added to liven up what must be one of the trickiest sections of the magazine to make interesting to the layman. And interesting it is. I appreciate Greg's stance on keeping the tech talk understandable. Thanks to him, I not only read all of the Hard Stuff every month, but also can immediately use any applicable information (I love the X-Gamer sound card he recommended). So, tell Greg to keep up the good work, and to remember: your mother knows and likes you anyway, and so do I.

— **Syndi Riley**, via the Internet

Games like *Tropico* are a sign that some game developers are willing to push games in new directions.

Wow! When did *PC Gamer* become the parents of the younger readers that Dwayne Smith referred to in his letter (June 2000)? To me, Mr. Smith's comments are just another perfect example of pushing parenting off on someone else. It's not the job of *PC Gamer* to parent these "younger readers" — it's the job of those kids' parents. With the games these kids are playing, you are worried about a few comments made in a magazine? If you don't like it, you don't have to read it! I implore Greg to keep it up (no, that was not a pornographic reference either, Dwayne...or then again maybe it was <wink>). Of course, I could be biased because I find Greg sexier than hell, or is that comment not G-rated enough for Mr. Smith?

— **Julie**, via the Internet

We're pretty sure these are legit letters and not sent in by Greg's relatives.

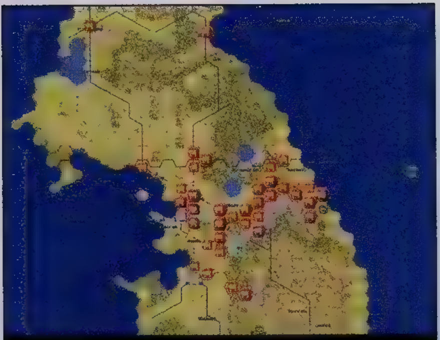
Two Takes on Trotter

I can't help but feel that Mr. Trotter missed the point of the entire *The Operational Art of War* discussion. As a reviewer, I would have thought that Mr. Trotter would have found the fact that in *TOAW* a "jeep could destroy a panther tank" to be a grievous flaw in any wargame. As this was only one of the many such inexcusable bugs that were in *TOAW* — let's not forget the absurd supply rules that were part of the original game — *TOAW* was subject to much derision, and the resultant storm over the game was more than understandable and spot on correct. The programmer, Mr. Koger, has had a long and successful career and to push this clearly inferior product on an unsuspecting public was equally inexcusable. If Mr. Trotter is implying that by clearly condemning this poor product to sales of 1,298 copies because of the "grognard" complaints then all I can say is: "Long live the grognard!" At least they represent an informed and demanding consumer base that will not be satisfied with mindless eye-candy and little realism, which describes *TOAW* perfectly.

— **Alan Horenstein**, via the Internet

I just wanted to write a letter of appreciation to William R. Trotter. I have been a subscriber since November 1997, and I have always turned right to his column — which is odd seeing as I don't even like wargames all that much! He is an excellent writer and his reviews are always honest, easy to read, and involving. All the editors there at *PC Gamer* are good, but Trotter has, in my mind, always stood out above the rest. So William R. Trotter, I salute you and look forward to many more columns and reviews to come.

— **Joshua Bailey**, via the Internet



Alan Horenstein thinks *TOAW* is "mindless eye-candy." Hey Alan, sell your 386 and try *Quake III*!

Alan, we can honestly say that this is the first time we've ever heard anyone use the term eye-candy and TOAW *in the same sentence. You must be a grognard! We happen to feel as Joshua does — we plan to keep Colonel Trotter at* PCG *for as long as he'll have us.*

File This One Under: Get a Life!

I was greatly shocked by the horrendous mistake made on page 87 of the June 2000 issue of your magazine, regarding the *Star Wars: Force Commander* game. One of the small photos on that page depicts two AT-ATs, but the caption below refers to them as AT-STs. How could you have possibly made a more grievous error? Every Star Wars fan worth his Kessel Spice knows the difference between an AT-AT (All Terrain Armored Transport) and the smaller AT-ST (All Terrain Scout Transport). My faith in your competence as game reviewers has been ruined. The only way you can appease me and the many other Star Wars fans you have offended is by correctly answering a Star Wars trivia question. I'm a nice guy, so I'll give you an easy one: How many Ion cannons are mounted on an Imperial Star Destroyer? I'll be waiting for your answer. Do not fail me again!

P.S. As punishment for his transgressions, reviewer Stephen Poole should be forced to walk around the *PCG* offices for a week wearing a Jar Jar Binks mask, so that he can be mocked publicly for his ignorance.

— Lawson "Wedge" Deming,
via the Internet

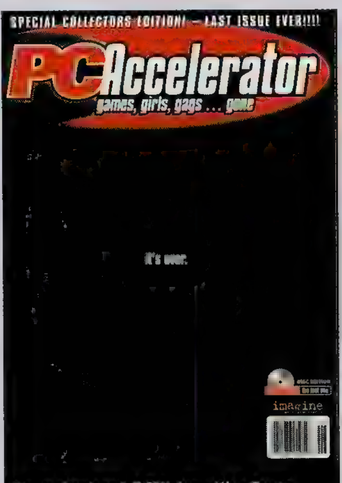
We will write, "These are AT-ATs, not AT-STs" one hundred times. Will that make you happy, Lawson?

Oddly, Steve had been doing this long before we ever received this letter. As for your question, we refuse to answer on the grounds that we…well …wouldn't want to embarrass you with our extensive Star Wars knowledge. Yeah, that's the ticket.

Less is More?

I have been a reader of your mag. for several years now, and I must say that I am in love with it. I like the perfect blend of serious, factual reviews and great comedy, like the jelly fish poem or the reviews a really bad game like *Extreme Paintbrawl* gets. I have, however, been less pleased with the issues as of late. Gone seem the days when I could expect to receive a four hundred-page mag in the mail. The past three issues have seemed skimpy compared to the volumes of gaming goodness I had come to expect. Please tell me that this is not a trend that you plan to continue. Please give me my bigger issues back.

— Will, via the Internet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Even die-hard *PCXL* fans like Scott Brown are being won over by *PCG*'s charms. Don't knock us 'till you try us!

Thanks, Will. We'd all love to see the days of the phone-book-sized issues return, but it's probably not going to happen anytime soon. Our book size is partially determined by the number of ads we run (if it were up to us editor types, we'd have 300-page ad-free books every month).

Regardless of the size of the mag (and if you'll notice, we're still larger than our competitors), our goal is to fill every page with as much gaming info and entertainment as we can.

You Never Know Until You Try

Well guys, it really sucks that my favorite magazine, *PCXL*, is gone. Then I heard that I was going to have to fulfill my subscription with "PC Lamer." Ugh, I thought.

But then I went to the store to pick up a copy just to see what it was like, and all I have to say is *PCX*...who?

— Scott Brown,
via the Internet

PCG

Readers Respond to *WarCraft III* Changes

Blizzard sure rocked a few boats when it announced that *WarCraft III* would revert to its safe RTS roots. Around the office, the reaction was mostly negative — we like to see innovation. We wanted to see how our readers felt about the changes, and much to our surprise, many of you defended Blizzard's decision.

"The changes that Blizzard has made to *WarCraft III* are nothing less than a travesty. Do we really need another RTS game? No. Do we really want another RTS game? No. What we want is something we haven't played before, something that introduces a whole new genre to the gaming world, like *Dune II* did so many years ago."
— Jack Lenehan, via the Internet

"I think the revamping of *WarCraft III* can only be a good thing."
— Don Nelson, via the Internet

"After reading about the proposed changes for the upcoming *WarCraft III*, only one thing came to my mind — that's pathetic! Blizzard was poised on the brink of new territory in gaming — their roleplaying real-time strategy idea could have changed the entire gaming world. Alas, genius seems fleeting in the minds of our old WarCraft friends, who decided on the safe path rather than the revolutionary one."
— Amylia Day, via the Internet

"I too, am disappointed to hear that Blizzard will be taking *WarCraft III* back to the same old RTS game model. C'mon, Blizzard! You're supposed to set the standards that other developers follow, not just follow the pack and pump out another tired game."
— Rob McDonald, via the Internet

"I think Blizzard is making a good decision. I personally was having a hard time imagining how the RTS/RPG thing was going to pan out."
— Adrian Woods, via the Internet

"Blizzard is definitely not afraid of 'overstepping its boundaries'. They will produce the game that produces the most fun possible, and nothing else. And Blizzard knows best when it comes to having fun, so respect their decision on changing *WarCraft III*."
— Anon, via the Internet

"The only reason Blizzard is making the changes is to improve gameplay and customer satisfaction — in essence, to make it a better game. Would you release a game with an unprecedented style of gameplay that was actually no fun to play? Would you consider changing the game in order to make it more fun 'chickening out'? I believe the answer to both questions is no."
— Anon, via the Internet

"I love the WarCraft games, and I'd rather see a less ambitious sequel that is an excellent extension of the already-proven formula than a risky creation which is almost guaranteed to tick people off."
— Joshua Stone, via the Internet

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Tyan S1598 Trinity ATX	MB5008	VIA Apollo MVP3	2048	384	3		Award		UltraDMA/66	5	2	1	ATX	3 Yrs	$121	$180	$206	$181

Slot A

Slot A	Part Number	Chip Set	Maximum Memory (MB)	168-pin DIMM Sockets	Flash BIOS	Bus Frequency	Integrated Controller	PCI Slots	ISA Slots	AGP Slot	Format	Manufacturer's Warranty	Motherboard Only	w/AMD Athlon™ 700MHz	w/AMD Athlon 750MHz	w/AMD Athlon 800MHz	w/AMD Athlon 850MHz	w/AMD Athlon 900MHz	w/AMD Athlon 950MHz	w/AMD Athlon 1000MHz
ABIT KA7	MB7501	VIA Apollo KX133	2048	4	Award	200/133	UltraDMA/66	6	1	1	ATX	1 Yr.	$169	$364	$394	$459	$549	$679	$839	$1129
Asus K7V	MB7703	VIA Apollo KX133	1536	3	Award	200/133	UltraDMA/66	5		1	ATX	1 Yr	$189	$384	$414	$479	$569	$699	$859	$1149
EPoX EP-7KXA	MB7850	VIA Apollo KX133	768	3	Award	200/133	UltraDMA/66	5	1	1	ATX	2 Yrs.	$126	$321	$351	$416	$506	$636	$796	$1086
FIC SD11	MB7401	AMD-751 / VIA 686A	768	3	Award	100	UltraDMA/66	5	1	1	ATX	1 Yr.	$119	$314	$344	$409	$499	$629	$789	$1079
Microstar K7 Pro	MB7202	AMD-750	768	3	Award	100	UltraDMA/66	6	1	1	ATX	1 Yr.	$139	$334	$364	$429	$519	$649	$809	$1099
Shuttle AI61	MB7901	AMD-750	768	3	Award	100	UltraDMA/66	5		1	MicroATX	1 Yr.	$125	$320	$350	$415	$505	$635	$795	$1085
Tyan S2380 Trinity K7	MB7000	VIA Apollo KX133	768	3	Award	200/133	UltraDMA/66	6	1	1	ATX	3 Yrs.	$147	$342	$372	$437	$527	$657	$817	$1107

Socket A

Socket A	Part Number	Chip Set	Maximum Memory (MB)	168-pin DIMM Sockets	Flash BIOS	Bus Frequency	Integrated Controller	PCI Slots	ISA Slots	AGP Slot	Format	Manufacturer's Warranty	Motherboard Only	w/AMD Duron™ 600MHz	w/AMD Duron 650MHz	w/AMD Duron 700MHz	w/AMD Athlon™ 700MHz with Enhanced Cache	w/AMD Athlon 800MHz with Enhanced Cache	w/AMD Athlon 850MHz with Enhanced Cache	w/AMD Athlon 900MHz with Enhanced Cache	w/AMD Athlon 950MHz with Enhanced Cache	w/AMD Athlon 1000MHz with Enhanced Cache
FIC AZ11	MB7402	VIA Apollo KT133	1536	3	Award	200/133	UltraDMA/66	5		1	ATX	1 Yr	$132	$232	$257	$307	$327	$422	$512	$642	$802	$1092
Microstar K7T Pro	MB7203	VIA Apollo KT133	1536	3	Award	200/133	UltraDMA/66	5		1	ATX	1 Yr	$139	$239	$264	$314	$334	$429	$519	$649	$809	$1099
Shuttle MK11	MB7902	VIA Apollo KT133	1536	3	Award	200/133	UltraDMA/66	2		1	MicroATX	1 Yr	$109	$209	$234	$284	$304	$399	$489	$619	$779	$1069

Socket 370

Socket 370	Part Number	Chip Set	Maximum Memory (MB)	168-pin DIMM Sockets	Flash BIOS	Integrated Audio	Integrated Video	PCI Slots	ISA Slots	AGP Slot	AMR Slot	Format	Manufacturer's Warranty	Motherboard Only	w/Intel® Celeron™ processor 500/A MHz 128K OD 66MHz FSB	w/Intel Celeron 566 128K OD 66MHz FSB	w/Intel Celeron 600 128K OD 66MHz FSB	w/Intel Celeron 633 128K OD 66MHz FSB	w/Intel Pentium® III 667 256K OD 133MHz FSB	w/Intel Pentium III 733 256K OD 133MHz FSB	w/Intel Pentium III 750 256K OD 100MHz FSB	w/Intel Pentium III 800/EB 256K OD 100/133MHz FSB	w/Intel Pentium III 850 256K OD 100MHz FSB	w/Intel Pentium III 866 256K OD 133MHz FSB	w/Intel Pentium III 933 256K OD 133MHz FSB
ABIT VH6	MB6511	VIA Apollo Pro 133A	768	3	Award	AC-97		5	1	1	1	ATX	1 Yr	$109	$191	$219	$244	$274	$339	$384	$424	$464	$649	$719	$939
ASUS CUBX	MB6726	Intel 440BX	1024	4	Award	AC-97		6	1	1		ATX	1 Yr	$151	$233	$261	$286	$316	N/A	N/A	$466	$506	$691	N/A	N/A
ASUS CUV4X	MB6725	VIA Apollo Pro 133A	1536	3	Award	AC-97		5	1	1	1	ATX	1 Yr	$125	$207	$235	$260	$290	$355	$400	$440	$480	$665	$735	$955
EPoX EP-3VCA	MB6854	VIA Apollo Pro 133A	768	3	Award	AC-97		4	1	1	1	ATX	2 Yrs	$105	$187	$215	$240	$270	$335	$380	$420	$460	$645	$715	$935
FIC FA11	MB6412	VIA Apollo Pro 133A	1024	4	Award			5	2	1		ATX	1 Yr	$103	$185	$213	$238	$268	$333	$378	$418	$458	$643	$713	$933
Shuttle AV14	MB6311	VIA Apollo Pro 133A	768	3	Award			5	2	1		ATX	1 Yr.	$97	$179	$207	$232	$262	$327	$372	$412	$452	$637	$707	$927
Shuttle ME64	MB6310	Intel 810E	512	2	Award	Intel 810E	Intel 810E	3			1	Micro ATX	1 Yr	$116	$198	$226	$251	$281	$346	$391	$431	$471	$656	$726	$946
SuperMicro 370SEA	MB6140	Intel 810E	512	2	AMI	Intel 810E	Intel 810E	6	1		1	ATX	1 Yr.	$134	$216	$244	$269	$299	$364	$409	$449	$489	$674	$744	$964
SuperMicro 370DLE (Dual)	MB6154	Reliance LE	2048	2	AMI			6	1			ATX	1 Yr.	$333	$415	$443	$468	$498	$563	$608	$648	$688	$873	$943	$1163
SuperMicro 370DL3 (Dual)	MB6155	Reliance LE	2048	2	AMI			6	1			ATX	1 Yr.	$536	$618	$646	$671	$701	$766	$811	$851	$891	$1076	$1146	$1366
Tyan S1854 Trinity 400	MB6018	VIA Apollo Pro 133A	768	3	Award			6	1	1		ATX	3 Yrs.	$105	$187	$215	$240	$270	$335	$380	$420	$460	$645	$715	$935

Slot 1

Slot 1	Part Number	Chip Set	Maximum Memory (MB)	168-pin DIMM Sockets	168-pin RIMM Sockets	Flash BIOS	Integrated Audio	Integrated Controller	PCI Slots	ISA Slots	AGP Slot	Format	Manufacturer's Warranty	Motherboard Only	w/Intel® Pentium III® 550 512K 100MHz FSB	w/Intel Pentium III 650/667 256K OD 100/133MHz FSB	w/Intel Pentium III 700 256K OD 100MHz FSB	w/Intel Pentium III 733 256K OD 133MHz FSB	w/Intel Pentium III 750 256K OD 100MHz FSB	w/Intel Pentium III 800/EB 256K OD 100/133MHz FSB	w/Intel Pentium III 850 256K OD 100MHz FSB	w/Intel Pentium III 933 256K OD 133MHz FSB	w/Dual Intel Pentium III 550 512K 100MHz FSB	w/Dual Intel Pentium III 750 256K OD 100MHz FSB
ABIT BE6-II	MB6508	Intel 440BX	768	3		Award		UltraDMA/66	5	1	1	ATX	1 Yr	$140	$335	$370	$410	N/A	$455	$495	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
ABIT VA6	MB6509	VIA Apollo Pro 133	768	3		Award	AC-97	UltraDMA/66	5	2	1	ATX	1 Yr.	$88	$283	$318	$358	$363	$403	$443	$628	$918	N/A	N/A
ABIT VT6X4	MB6510	VIA Apollo Pro 133A	768	3		Award	AC-97	UltraDMA/66	5	2	1	ATX	1 Yr	$107	$302	$337	$377	$382	$422	$462	$647	$937	N/A	N/A
Asus P2B-DS (Dual)	MB6707	Intel 440BX	1024	4		Award			4	2	1	ATX	1 Yr	$497	$692	$727	$767	N/A	$812	$852	N/A	N/A	$887	$1127
Asus P3B-F	MB6720	Intel 440BX	1024	4		Award			6	1	1	ATX	1 Yr	$140	$335	$370	$410	N/A	$455	$495	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Asus P3V4X	MB6723	VIA Apollo Pro 133A	1024	4		Award		UltraDMA/66	6	1	1	ATX	1 Yr.	$125	$320	$355	$395	$400	$440	$480	$665	$955	N/A	N/A
EPoX EP-6VBA2	MB6855	VIA Apollo Pro 133A	768	3		Award	AC-97	UltraDMA/66	4	2	1	ATX	2 Yrs	$108	$303	$338	$378	$383	$423	$463	$648	$938	N/A	N/A
FIC KA11	MB6411	VIA Apollo Pro 133A	1024	4		Award		UltraDMA/66	5	2	1	ATX	1 Yr	$98	$293	$328	$368	$373	$413	$453	$638	$928	N/A	N/A
Intel L440GX+ (Dual)	MB6917	Intel 440GX	2048	4		Intel/Phoenix		Adaptec 2-Ch U2W	6	1		ATX	3 Yrs	$559	$754	$789	$829	N/A	$874	$914	N/A	N/A	$949	$1189
Intel SE440BX-2 "Seattle"	MB6921	Intel 440BX	768	3		Intel/Phoenix			4	2	1	ATX	3 Yrs.	$117	$312	$347	$387	N/A	$432	$472	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Shuttle AV64	MB6309	VIA Apollo Pro 133A	768	3		Award		UltraDMA/66	5	2	1	ATX	1 Yr	$93	$288	$323	$363	$368	$408	$448	$633	$923	N/A	N/A
SuperMicro PIIISED	MB6142	Intel 810e	512	2		AMI	AC-97	UltraDMA/66	6			ATX	1 Yr	$126	$321	$356	$396	$401	$441	$481	$666	$956	N/A	N/A
SuperMicro PIIIDM3 (Dual)	MB6153	Intel 840	4096	4		AMI	AC-97	Adaptec Ultra3/160	6		1	ATX	1 Yr	$599	$794	$829	$869	$874	$914	$954	$1139	$1429	$989	$1229
SuperMicro P6DGU (Dual)	MB6122	Intel 440GX	2048	4		AMI		Adaptec U2W	5	2	1	ATX	1 Yr.	$474	$669	$704	$744	N/A	$789	$829	N/A	N/A	$864	$1104
SuperMicro P6SBA	MB6120	Intel 440BX	768	3		AMI			4	3	1	ATX	1 Yr	$99	$294	$329	$369	N/A	$414	$454	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
SuperMicro P6SBU	MB6128	Intel 440BX	1024	4		AMI		Adaptec U2W	4	3	1	ATX	1 Yr	$335	$530	$565	$605	N/A	$650	$690	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Tyan S1834 Tiger 133 (Dual)	MB6020	VIA Apollo Pro 133A	2048	4		Award		UltraDMA/66	6	1	1	ATX	3 Yrs	$179	$374	$409	$449	$454	$494	$534	$719	$1009	$569	$809
Tyan S1854 Trinity 400	MB6018	VIA Apollo Pro 133A	768	3		Award		UltraDMA/66	6	1	1	ATX	3 Yrs.	$105	$300	$335	$375	$380	$420	$460	$645	$935	N/A	N/A

Slot 2

Slot 2	Part Number	Chip Set	Maximum Memory (MB)	168-pin DIMM Sockets	Flash BIOS	Integrated Audio	Integrated Video	Integrated Controller	Integrated Networking	PCI Slots	ISA Slots	AGP Slot	Format	Manufacturer's Warranty	Motherboard Only	w/Intel® Pentium III® Xeon™ 550MHz 512K 100MHz FSB	w/Intel Xeon 550MHz 1M 100MHz FSB	w/Intel Xeon 550MHz 2M 100MHz FSB	w/Dual Intel Xeon 550MHz 512K 100MHz	w/Quad Intel Xeon 550MHz 512K 100MHz	w/Intel Xeon 700MHz 1M 100MHz FSB	w/Intel Xeon 700MHz 2M 100MHz FSB	w/Intel Xeon 800MHz 1M 100MHz FSB
SuperMicro S2DM3	MB6156	Intel 840	4096	4	AMI	AC-97		Adaptec Ultra3/160m	Intel PRO/100+	6		1	ATX	1 Yr	$676	$1776	$3006	$5016	$2876	N/A	$2076	$3026	$3046
SuperMicro S2QR6	MB6190	Reliance HE	16384	16	AMI			AIC-7899 2-Ch Ultra160	Intel 82559	8			SWTX	1 Yr	$2732	$3832	$5062	$7072	$4932	$7132	$4132	$5082	$5102

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You may have heard of a game designer called John Romero. He's not been answering too many questions recently, taking a break after all the *Daikatana* hullabaloo (you may have heard about it?). So find out here about the man behind the most highly publicized game in our industry's history.

John Romero

How the devil are you?
Doing really good!

What was the first computer game you ever played?
It was probably *Poison Cookie* on an HP Mainframe, way back in 1979. Right after that one was *Hunt the Wumpus.*

What's the worst game you've ever been involved in making?
Hmm...there are actually quite a few of those, but they date back to the early 1980s. Games like *Alien Attack, Alien Conflict, Enemy Attack, Phantasm III, Jumpster*...they're all pretty bad. They got much better starting in 1985.

What's the best game you've played recently?
Age of Empires II.

When was the last time a computer game drove you to the brink of madness?
It could have been while playing *Sea Dragon* (by John Anderson, R.I.P.) on the Apple II. It was *so hard* getting through all the little tunnels, Scramble-like, trying to stay alive long enough to rescue the Sea Dragon at the end of the game. Then, after you shot all the bricks (and *not* the Sea Dragon), you had to go all the way *back* to the beginning! Madness.

What do you think is the greatest moment in the history of gaming?
That's a little too broad, so I'll answer this my way. My own greatest moment was the day we uploaded *Doom* to the Internet and BBSs.

// My own greatest moment was the day we uploaded Doom *to the Internet and BBSs. //*

Have you ever been arrested?
Heh, only once. My parents refused to pick me up when I was stranded on an Air Force base, so I had to find a place to sleep (it's *cold* in England). So, I finally ended up in the base church, on the floor under some chairs, sleeping, until the police arrived, woke me up and took me to the station. My dad had to pick me up at 5 a.m., and he was *not* happy.

Daikatana. ***Discuss. (In five words or less)***
Massive single-player gaming goodness.

If there was one thing about the games business that you could smite with one mighty blow, what would it be?
It would be the negative gaming/news sites and all those web sites and magazines that report their news as being newsworthy.

Violence in gaming: legitimate concern or media hysteria?
Media hysteria. I've been playing violent games for more than 20 years, and I haven't killed very many things because of it.

Any great hair care tips?
Not unless you have long hair.

Did playing* Doom *ever make you want to kill anybody?
Hahahahaha, yeah — Shawn Green! We used to Deathmatch at id, and when he'd win, I would blast out of the office before he could come into my room and ridicule me. But really, I wanted to kill him and *not* run away like a baby.

What do you have in your pockets right now?
Nothing at all. When I get to my office, I take everything out so I'm comfortable.

You're in a bar and someone starts to hit on Stevie. What do you do?
I watch her beat them down. She's good at that.

What if it was me?
Oh, that would be a-okay with me because she'd never even *imagine* being with someone like you, let alone actually do anything about it.

What's your most unpleasant characteristic?
I'm stubborn and like getting my way.

What game do you wish somebody would make?
Well, it's already made, and I can't wait to play it. It's called *Chrono Cross,* and I've been waiting five years for it!

PCG

PC GAMER

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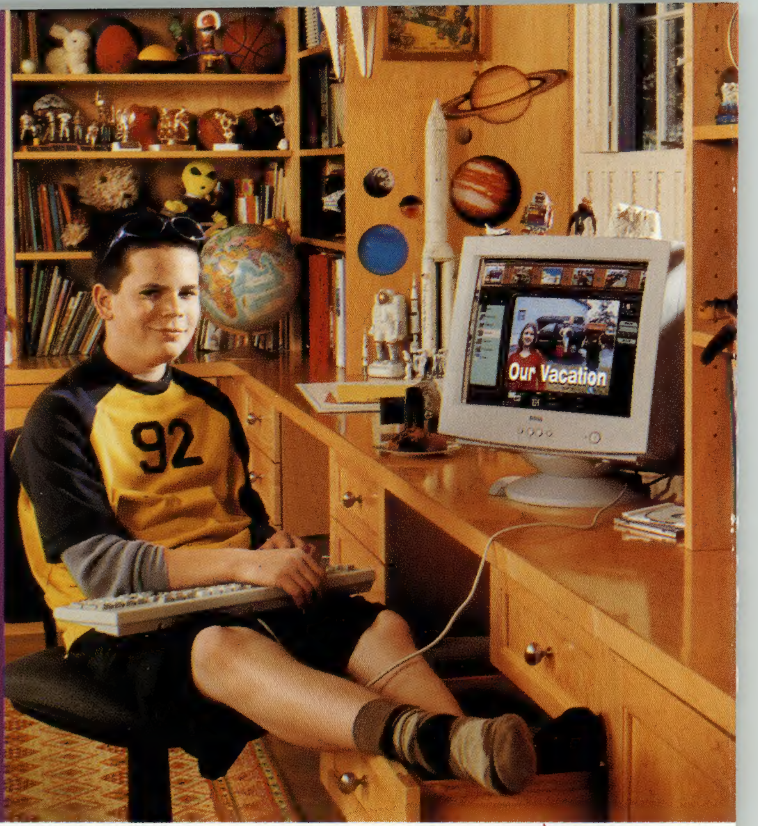
It was so great having Hammy resurrected from the dead. He ran around in his little Habitrail, ate his little hamster food, and took his little hamster naps. It was wonderful having Hammy back from the grave, bringing joy to the office.

Things went well for several weeks. They played with him and fed him and laughed as he ran in his little hamster cage. But one day there was a nasty surprise. Lisa was petting Hammy, when, for no reason, he lashed out and bit her thumb. This was as odd as it was frightening. The Hammy of old never, ever bit. (Continued...)

17 hours of our trip to Mt. Rushmore edited down to 4 thrilling minutes.



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